

# Pain Management



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Pain is a perception. Research shows if you change your attitude, you can change your physical well-being and even your life span.

Mike Siemens is director of exercise physiology at Canyon Ranch in Tucson where he has worked for nearly 17 years. He cautions people from “owning” their pain: “Too many people get crippled by their diagnosis or pain because it’s a head thing.”

While people seem to recognize the power of positive thinking, there are fewer in consensus about the best practices for pain management. So it’s that much more important to act as your own advocate and seek help from the right people.

“Be skeptical especially when (treatment) comes from physicians who don’t specialize in orthopedic or soft tissue specialties,” Siemens says. “Many doctors and surgeons aren’t preventative people.”

When searching for a specialist, seek advice from those who’ve found relief from the same pain bothering you. Jogging injury? Ask a friend who runs marathons to recommend a sports medicine doctor.

Often, those in pain have dysfunctional patterns of movement that are either part of an original injury or a compensation developed by accommodating the problem area. Remember: The area of the body experiencing pain isn’t necessarily the source of the pain, and relief often comes from a variety of complementary treatments.



## ANUSARA YOGA

Certified Hatha Yoga Instructor Laura Greenlaw has been teaching yoga for nearly six years. She welcomes students to class with a bright smile and says farewell with just as many hugs as she does with words. Besides her contagious warmth, she makes an impression also with her physique: She’s in shape, but doesn’t fit the instructor stereotype of a 90-pound Gumby – an encouragement there’s hope for those of us who can’t contort into human pretzels.

She waves goodbye to students who’ve just finished her 1.5 hour beginner class at YogaOasis in Tucson, one of the relatively few studios in Arizona that specialize solely in Anusara yoga. Only about 10 years old, Anusara is all about alignment, making this specific style ideal for pain management, according to Greenlaw.

“I’m a firm believer in Anusara yoga,” Greenlaw says. “It’s not easy. We have to work to realign ourselves to our optimal alignment. It’s a life process because you’re never there, you can always go deeper. I can’t say enough good about yoga. It’s the best gift I’ve given myself.”

She says that of her many students seeking relief from pain, most struggle with shoulder and back issues, which can be caused by any number of things – hunching over a computer or “one-ear talking.” Greenlaw



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recommends participating in a class three times a week for at least two months before deciding if yoga is right for you. And folks wary of the practice because its religious teachings rooted in Eastern traditions are different from their own beliefs shouldn't sweat it (well, figuratively speaking that is), as Greenlaw assures there is a place for all.

"I grew up with Jesus, and I still love Jesus. We don't ask you to believe anything but what you believe fully," she says. "You have to be open to hearing your own truth and looking at your own heart. We can help you with the tools of yoga, but only you can help your own well-being."



## CHIROPRACTOR CARE

Chiropractic care can significantly lessen pain and sometimes restore maximum function. Practitioners treat a wide variety of conditions including allergies, asthma, carpal tunnel syndrome, headaches, PMS, tennis elbow and stress. So what are you waiting for? Get crackin' (pun intended).

While there are many techniques, some adjustment methods are more brisk than others and can produce a cracking sound when the gas and fluids in the joint shift. An adjustment is a precise, brief thrust delivered to an area of the spine or joint, which is intended to reduce nervous system irritation and/or functional distortion.

People either with new injuries caused by a specific event — falling, overexertion, a car accident or poor weightlifting technique — or aches developed over time from a lifetime of poor posture, for example, may find adjustments helpful. Sessions also can be a preventative measure when incorporated into a regular health regime. It's not unusual to experience relief within the first few visits, although chronic pain usually takes longer.

"The impact of the mind-body connection is probably one of the most exciting areas in chronic pain management," says Chiropractor Margaret Powell, DC, MA, Dipl. Ac, who founded Powell Clinic in Scottsdale and has been practicing for more than 30 years.

She recommends managing mental or emotional stress in tandem with chiropractic visits and suggests consulting a psychologist well versed in pain management or investing in a biofeedback program for your home computer, such as Healing Rhythms developed by Deepak Chopra, M.D., Dean Ornish, M.D., and Andrew Weil, M.D.

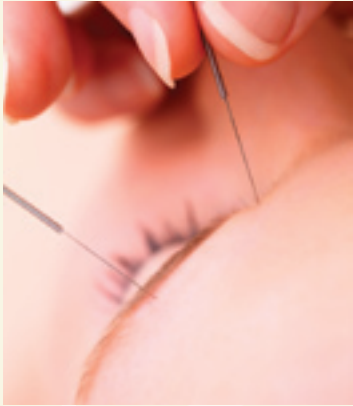
Rehabilitation and stabilization exercises are vital to successful chiropractic care, she says, which may include Pilates, swimming, hiking, weight resistant exercises, yoga or acupuncture.

## ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture is designed to keep energy flowing in balance by inserting fine needles into a meridian point to disperse or attract energy to that area. A



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combination of these points redirects the flow of energy that has become stagnant. Energy clots called Qi are believed to be caused by a physical condition or emotional mindset.

There are several types of acupuncture that vary by culture (Chinese, Japanese, Korean) and location (full body, ear, hand). It has the ability to completely resolve nearly all kinds of pain, although it may not work in instances of severe trauma. Sometimes treatment must be repeated or combined with other modalities — namely diet, exercise and meditation.

Catherine Niemiec, J.D., L.A.c., first received acupuncture when she was a law school student struggling with stress and bronchitis, and she later went on to study Chinese medicine because it was so effective for her. Now the founder and president of Phoenix Institute of Herbal Medicine and Acupuncture in Phoenix, Niemiec says most of her patients suffer from sports injuries, headaches, carpal tunnel syndrome, back and neck aches, knee or elbow pain, menstrual cramps, gynecological pain and fibromyalgia. Other clients, including Niemiec, have used acupuncture to overcome infertility and start contractions during delivery.



“Although this medicine is thousands of years old, it is based on a very real science,” Niemiec says. “One that was not acknowledged to exist by conventional medicine because it was not visible to the eye, which has later been validated through electrical and nuclear methods.”

## WATER THERAPY

Water is a uniquely ideal environment for both exercise and pain management because in it you weigh one-fifth of what you do on land, providing 12 times the resistance in every direction (with virtually zero impact).

“Almost no one experiences pain in the water,” Siemens says.

Underwater versions of the bicycle, Treadmaster and elliptical machine as well as floating devices (floatation belts, seats, noodles and more) that allow you to jog or walk in place while floating are all excellent ways to get a cardiovascular workout, which increases blood flow to damaged muscle tissue without impact.

But you don't have to workout to reap some of the benefits of water: Simply being in the water takes stress off the spine, as vertebrae find relief from gravity that compresses them together.

Warm water, particularly, can be immensely therapeutic, and one of the best testaments to this is Dimension One Spas headquartered in Vista, Calif., which specializes in manufacturing luxury hot tubs and swim spas. The company has been serving the Arizona market for nearly all 30 years it has been in business, and Arizona is home to one of its top dealers.



photo courtesy of: DIMENSION ONE SPAS - VISTA, CA - [www.d1spas.com](http://www.d1spas.com)

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“Humans can’t live without water. Today, scientists have demonstrated what the early Greeks, Romans and Egyptians knew long ago — warm water relaxes the body, relieves muscle aches and stiffness, eases joint pains and inflammation and is a natural healer for arthritis, migraine headaches (and) hypertension,” says Bob Hallam, founder of Dimension One Spas. “I believe it is the single best antidote for the common cold.”



## PROLO THERAPY

Prolo therapy is a non-surgical, permanent treatment for chronic pain. Short for proliferation therapy, it causes the growth of new ligament tissue in areas that have become weak. About three to five years old, the approach hinges on one key, counterintuitive idea: Inflammation is good. One method is to inject a type of sugar called dextrose into the aggravated area to increase swelling, pain and blood flow. The body thinks it’s far more hurt than it really is, so it sends even more healing agents to the area than it otherwise would, thereby speeding up recovery time. Number of treatments typically range from three to 10.

## MCKENZIE METHOD

The Mckenzie Method is defined by exercises for back and neck pain, and it’s also a specific approach to spinal problems. Siemens explains that each person does about 1,000 episodes of flexion each day and, unfortunately, zero extensions. Flexion could mean slumping over a computer all day, making your spine curved rather than straight in its “neutral,” ideal position. To counter pressure you’ve put on your body, do the opposite movement. Lay on the floor face down, press your hands into the floor and lift your torso off the ground (in yoga this is called the Cobra position). Doing this briefly once a day can significantly counter the stress you’re putting on your body, Siemen says, adding: “I like it a lot because it empowers people to help themselves.”

