

Ask Your Pharmacist

Pain Management

According to the CDC, nonopioid therapies are at least as effective as opioids for many common types of acute pain. Common types of acute pain include lower back pain, injuries such as sprains/tendonitis, minor postoperative pain, dental pain, headache/migraines, kidney stone pain. Nonopioids used for acute pain include acetaminophen, topical or oral non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), musculoskeletal agents, topical capsaicin, and lidocaine patches. Opioids should be used at the lowest most effective dose for the shortest expected duration of pain. Examples of opioids include morphine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, and fentanyl. Non-medication treatments such as heat or cold, massage, exercise, acupuncture, spinal manipulation, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), and remote electrical neuromodulation can also be effective for acute pain.

Acute Pain	Low Back pain	Musculoskeletal pain, sprains, strains	Headache, Migraines	Post-operative Pain	Dental Pain	Kidney stone pain
Non-opioid	NSAIDs, skeletal muscle relaxants	Topical or oral NSAIDs, acetaminophen	NSAIDs, triptans, antiemetics, dihydroergotamine, acetaminophen	NSAIDs	NSAIDs	NSAIDs
Non-medication	Heat Spinal Manipulation	Ice	Remote electrical neuromodulation	Massage		

Nonopioid therapies are preferred for subacute and chronic pain. Non-opioid therapies include antidepressants and antiseizure medications. Non-medication treatments for chronic pain are exercise therapy, physical therapy, psychological therapy, aquatic therapy, weight loss, acupuncture, spinal manipulation, yoga, tai chi, low-level laser therapy, massage, mindfulness-based stress reduction, multidisciplinary rehabilitation.

Chronic Pain	Low Back pain	Osteoarthritis Pain	Fibromyalgia
Non-opioid	NSAIDs	Topical or oral NSAIDs, SNRIs (duloxetine)	SNRIs, anti-seizure
Non-medication	Exercise, physical therapy, yoga, acupuncture	Exercise (aerobic/aquatic), physical therapy	Exercise (aerobic/aquatic), physical therapy, tai chi, acupuncture

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Here are some examples of how some non-medication therapies help with pain:

- Ice helps to relieve pain and reduce swelling. Heat helps reduce muscle pain and stiffness.
- [Yoga](#), tai chi, and exercise can help stretch and strengthen muscles.
- [Acupuncture](#) uses thin needles inserted at specific points in the body to relieve pain.
- [Massage therapy](#) can relieve stress, anxiety, and pain by relaxing muscles, tendons, and joints.
- Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) uses mild currents to relieve pain and muscles.
- [Spinal manipulation](#) applies a controlled force to a spinal joint.
- [Chronic pain and complementary health](#) and [low back pain and complementary health](#).

Pain management for patients 65+

Risks versus benefits and pain goals should be discussed with your provider. Those include:

- Drug-drug interactions
- Cognitive impairment
- Fall risk
- Use, dose, and duration of medications especially NSAIDs, TCAs, opioids, anti-seizure agents
- Use of the lowest effective dose
- Use of shortest duration of therapy

References

Dowell, Deborah; Ragan, Kathleen; Jones, Christopher M. CDC Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain – United States, 2022. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention MMWR, Recommendations and Reports. Vol. 71; No. 3. November 4, 2022

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