# Non-Pharmacological Treatments for Pain: Provider Information

- Opioids are not the first-line or routine therapy for chronic pain.
- Non-pharmacologic therapy and non-opioid pharmacologic therapy are preferred for chronic pain.
- If opioids are used, they should be combined with non-pharmacologic therapy and non-opioid pharmacologic therapy, as appropriate.

## Effective approaches to chronic pain should:
- Identify and address co-existing mental health conditions (e.g., depression, anxiety, PTSD).
- Focus on functional goals and improvement, engaging patients actively in their pain management.
- Use disease-specific treatments when available (e.g., triptans for migraines, gabapentin/pregabalin/duloxetine for neuropathic pain).
- Use first-line medication options preferentially.
- Use multimodal approaches, including interdisciplinary rehabilitation for patients who have failed standard treatments, have severe functional deficits, or psychosocial risk factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Pharmacological Treatments</th>
<th>Types of Pain Treated</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Yoga**<sup>1</sup>          | Low-back pain and neck pain  
                              | Osteoarthritis  
                              | Arthritis  
                              | Fibromyalgia  
                              | Carpal tunnel syndrome  
                              | Headaches | A mind-body and exercise practice that combines breath control, meditation, and movements to stretch and strengthen muscles. |
| **Cognitive-behavioral Therapy**<sup>2, 3, 4</sup> | Migraines  
                              | Fibromyalgia  
                              | Chronic low-back pain  
                              | Pain in children and adolescents with chronic headaches or other types of chronic pain | Trains patients in behavioral techniques, helps patients modify situational factors and cognitive processes that exacerbate pain, has small positive effects on disability and catastrophic thinking. |
| **Massage**<sup>5, 6, 7</sup> | Chronic low-back pain  
                              | Chronic neck pain  
                              | Pain due to osteoarthritis of the knee  
                              | Fibromyalgia  
                              | Headaches  
                              | Post-operative pain | The rubbing and kneading of muscles and joints of the body with the hands, especially to relieve tension or pain. |
| **Relaxation Techniques**<sup>8, 9</sup> | General pain  
                              | Chronic headaches  
                              | Chronic pain in children and adolescents | Include a number of practices (e.g., progressive relaxation, guided imagery, biofeedback, self-hypnosis and deep breathing exercises) to produce the body’s natural relaxation response, characterized by slower breathing, lower blood pressure and feeling of increased well-being. |
| **Acupuncture**<sup>10, 11</sup> | Types of pain that are often chronic: low-back pain, neck pain, osteoarthritis/knee pain  
                              | Tension headaches  
                              | Migraines  
                              | Post-surgical pain | A system of integrative medicine that involves pricking the skin or tissues with needles, used to alleviate pain and to treat various physical, mental, and emotional conditions. |
| **Mindfulness-based stress reduction**<sup>12, 13, 14</sup> | Chronic low-back pain | An eight-week evidence-based program that offers secular, intensive mindfulness training to assist people with stress, anxiety, depression and pain. |
| **Tai Chi and Qi Gong**<sup>15, 16, 17</sup> | Back pain and pain from knee osteoarthritis  
                              | May ease fibromyalgia pain  
                              | May reduce chronic neck pain, but study results are mixed | Mind and body practices. They involve certain postures and gentle movements with mental focus, breathing, and relaxation. |
Non-Pharmacological Treatments for Pain: 
Provider Information

References


