

Managing Chronic Pain

Alternatives to Opioids for Treating Chronic Pain

Introduction:

As you may have talked about with your provider, there are risks to using opioids for the treatment of chronic pain. Fortunately, there are many ways to treat pain without opioids. Outlined below are some of those options, which you may choose to discuss with your provider; some may be covered by insurance or can be accessed for free online.

Psychological Therapies:

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Focuses on changing how you think about pain in order to change how you feel pain. Goals include identifying negative thoughts and developing positive and healthy thinking habits.

Meditation: Helps you feel pain differently by focusing on centering yourself and being present with what you are thinking and feeling in that moment.

Mindfulness-Oriented Recovery Enhancement (MORE): Combines elements of CBT and meditation with the goal to change what emotions you focus on when you feel pain. It also aims to lower stress you feel when thinking about pain.

Group Therapy: Provides support by being with people with shared experiences. Groups meet to discuss common challenges and think of ways to overcome them. Being in a group may introduce you to new ways to manage pain.

Physical Therapies:

Physical Therapy (PT): Helps you gain strength and improve function, achieving set goals through movements and exercises guided by a physical therapist.

Massage Therapy: Helps relax tight muscles and improve joint mobility by working with a massage therapist.

Yoga: A low-impact form of exercise that improves mobility, stretches tight muscles, and strengthens muscles and joints.

Chiropractic Treatment: Helps relieve back pain and improve mobility through adjustment techniques performed by a chiropractor.

Alternative Medications for Pain:

Med Name	Brand Name	Dose	Frequency	Note
Acetaminophen	Tylenol	1000mg	3x daily	Can be taken with ibuprofen.
Ibuprofen	Advil, Motrin	400mg	4-6x daily	Talk with your provider before taking. Can be taken with acetaminophen.
Naproxen Sodium	Aleve	440mg	1-2x daily	Talk with your provider before taking.
Diclofenac Sodium	Voltaren	N/A	4x daily	Talk with your provider before applying
Capsaicin	Capzacin	N/A	4x daily	N/A

There are also prescription alternatives to opioids that you may choose to discuss with your provider.

References:

1. St Marie B, Broglio K. Managing Pain in the Setting of Opioid Use Disorder. Pain Manag Nurs. 2020 Feb;21(1):26-34.