

Self-Help Strategies

Cold packs can help reduce the inflammation and give some relief but, using hot and cold therapy combined is most effective. The application of cold pushes fluid away from the area and reduces swelling. The use of heat draws new fluids with nutrients and other good stuff into the area. The cycling of hot and cold packs will flush the area more quickly and effectively. For the most effective treatment that penetrates deep into the tissues, apply one for 10-15 minutes then switch. Do at least two cycles and finish with whichever application feels the best to you. If ice is not well tolerated, use a washcloth dipped in ice water and squeeze out excess and apply. To keep it cold enough, you will need to recharge this very often and minimize the time it is not in contact with the area in need.

With a new injury always start with cold packs then alternate. The body is providing fluid to immobilize the area and prevent further injury by producing pain. Even when the pain is reduced after treatment, respect what the body was doing and try not to over-do-it.

Epsom salts can help calm the nervous system and relax muscle tension. Magnesium is absorbed directly through the skin. Nerves enjoy magnesium and mellow out, which then allows the muscles to let down their guard.

As a bath*, dissolve two cups of Epsom salts in hot water (As hot as you can tolerate) and soak for 15-20 minutes.

As a poultice, using either method below, apply directly to or near the target area. Rewet and repeat as time allows. Applying the solution to any portion of skin will provide some benefit. The main factors in the salts absorption are: skin area covered, water temperature and application time. The salts can be absorbed at body temperature with longer contact time.

Method 1) Place some Epsom salt crystals on a hot damp washcloth, fold to keep the salts in.

Method 2) Dissolve salts in hot water then use a washcloth to apply.

*Diabetics should not use the hot bath method. The blood sugar will be affected and any peripheral neuropathy might prevent them from getting a warning message from the extremities.

The Natural Anti-inflammatory affects of these powerful roots help reduce or eliminate the amount of ibuprofen and naproxen you take. As an added bonus these won't destroy your liver and mess up your digestive system. Ginger also helps increase lymph flow throughout the body.

Ginger	Fresh root	Grate into foods while cooking, use as a condiment and on salads Grate about 1½ to 2 inches of root into a quart of water and simmer for about 15-20 minutes for tea. Alternately, you can steep the same amount in almost boiling water for a spicier version. Drink tea as is, or add lemon and honey to taste. Add some ginger tea to a bath
	Dry spice	Add to dishes while cooking Put one teaspoon into a quart of water and simmer for 20-25 minutes for tea.
Turmeric	Fresh root	Add to foods. Make simple pickles with lemon and salt.
	Dry spice	Cook into soups, stews, curries, etc.

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Self-Help Strategies (Continued)

Therapeutic Stretching encourages feeling the more subtle sensations in your body. These sensations are the way the body speaks to us, even though it seems to be a forgotten language. Pain is the body's way of screaming for help. It blocks the ability to feel anything other than pain. We need to quiet ourselves and clear our thoughts to be able to "hear" the subtle messages.

When you are ready to stretch, close your eyes, be still and take a couple of slow relaxing breaths to release the tension in your whole body before the first stretch. As you exhale, feel the tension soften. Then slowly move into position for the stretch until you feel a slight tension then pause the movement right there and take two to three relaxing breaths (15-20 seconds if you are watching the clock). Don't pull the stretch any tighter during those breaths. Then move a little further into the stretch until you feel slight tension again, then pause and breathe again. Move on to another stretch.

The goal of these stretches is to become aware of and to release the tension patterns that have developed throughout your body, not necessarily to become more flexible. Don't compare your performance of any stretch to any other time you have done it, or to someone else. Instead learn to feel what your body is telling you, right now. The first sign of tension may not even occur where you expect it, so feel your entire body. Tension patterns can occur anywhere in the body due to physical injuries and emotional connections made during highly charged emotional states, as well as the body's adaptation to them. When you feel that slight tension: stop, hold and breathe.

It might take a little while for you to realize how effective this concept of stretching is. Quiet your over-active/bossy left brain and learn to enjoy the feeling. Use the appropriate stretches for your condition.

Do not stretch to pain. Do not overstretch

Reduce intake of stimulants to help calm the nervous system. Caffeine, Nicotine and other stimulants increase the sensitivity of the nervous system and the information transmission speed. Both of these increase the tension in the body and the sensations of pain.

Movement is the most important duty of your body. Our bodies are designed to move. They love to move. They need to move. Movement circulates the fluids of the body to provide nourishment and flush the waste products of cell function. It provides the lubrication for the joints. Without enough movement, muscle fibers/bundles, tendons, blood vessels, nerves, etc. start to adhere to each other, limiting the range of motion. Find some way to move every joint in the body every day. Walking, riding a bicycle, gardening, house work, parking farther from the grocery store, all can provide additional movement options. But, what if you need to build up strength first? Start in your bedroom or living room. Here are a couple of easy moves that can help improve your abilities.

- Lay on your back, bend your knees to hold your feet in the air and do the good old bicycle exercise that Jack LaLanne encouraged viewers to do. All you have to do is start pumping your feet and legs in a peddling motion, in the air. Start out with slow movements.
- Get down on your hands and knees and slowly start to bring your knee toward your chest, then straighten your leg out behind you. Do this several times with each leg.
- Stand beside a chair for balance. Lift one leg with knee bent as if taking high steps, hold it there for several seconds, then put it down. Repeat several times on each leg.
- Stand in front of a chair, as if you were ready to sit down. Start to sit, but only go part way down, then stand back up. Do this several times and increase the depth of the squat over time.

Be creative and find a safe way to rebuild your strength and stamina while minimizing the risk of injury. The more you move the more benefits your body receives.

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