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PAIN:
Alternative Therapies

By Scott Popyk, Rph MBA FIACP

You would die *without* pain. The sense of pain is a potentially life saving response to stimuli. Numerous natural chemicals course through our bodies which communicate to our spinal cord and brain that injury has or is occurring. Our brain then translates these messages into the sensation we call “pain”.

Just as chemical messengers can activate nerves that carry messages to our brain, certain prescription medications are effective to stop or slow the process of communication. Applying a topical pain medication to the injured area accomplishes just that.

Administering medications topically to relieve pain is nothing new. You have probably used (or at least smelled) a heat generating sport cream (e.g. Bengay). But did you know that prescription medications are being ordered by doctors for topical delivery as well? The objective for topical delivery is to reduce pain and side effects as compared to oral therapy.

Often, the same medications that a patient may take orally can be applied topically. For instance, some oral medications cause confusion, forgetfulness and drowsiness. The same drug, compounded in a special cream delivers medication through the skin to provide needed relief and reduced side-effects. Medications studied thus far have been for: inflammation, nerve pain, muscle relaxation, numbing, etc.

Many types of acute and chronic have been helped by topical therapy. If you'd like to explore whether topical therapy may be right for your pain, contact our pharmacists.

We will work with you and your doctor to determine the best course of action.

Source: Topical and Peripherally Acting Analgesic, Jana Sawynok, Dept of Pharmacology, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Continued on reverse

Alternative Treatments for Pain By Scott Popyk, Rph MBA FIACP



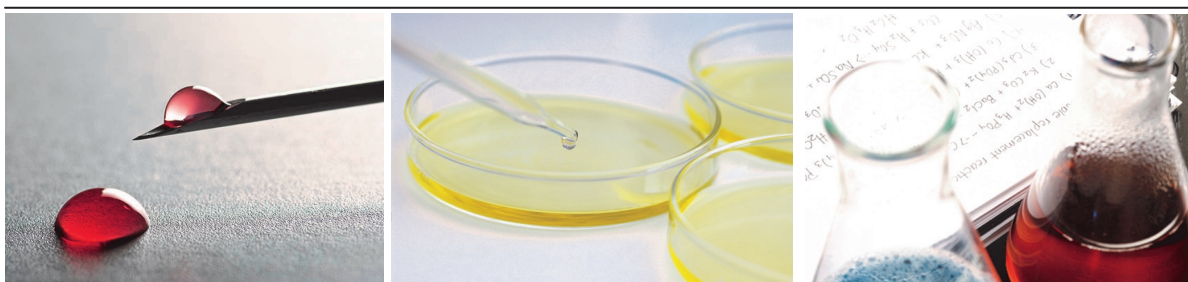
Spring time in Michigan brings out athletes of all types. It won't be too long before you start hearing about 'tennis elbow', 'golfers elbow', or other conditions affecting tendons of the shoulder or knee. For years the standard treatment for tendon pain has been anti-inflammatory agents, ice packs, or resting until the pain "goes away" But recent research is now exploring the role of a natural chemical called nitric oxide and its role during the healing process.

Within the injured tendon, nitric oxide is found in high concentrations and this presence is associated with wound recovery. The uninjured tendon, however, is not found to contain significant amounts of nitric oxide. Further research shows that when nitric oxide activity is inhibited, healing is impaired. Interestingly, nitric oxide has been observed to improve the repair of open wounds. Furthermore, a new generation of anti-inflammatory nitric oxide generating drug holds promise to side-step the stomach ulcer issues created by today's common anti-inflammatory drugs. So, nitric oxide can be understood to play an important role in diverse healing processes throughout the human body.

Specific studies* of tendon pain (tennis elbow and golfers elbow) treated with nitroglycerin to deliver nitric oxide, resulted in significant improvement of patient symptoms and function. Most studies utilized a nitroglycerin patch to deliver nitric oxide to the tendon. For the wound studies, nitroglycerin ointment was applied. In either case, nitric oxide was generated in the area of injury.

This topic became more interesting to me as I realized that topical nitric oxide might help my long-standing experience with tennis elbow. After discussing with my physician, he wrote a prescription for nitroglycerin cream which was applied two to three times daily. With time and repeat application, the pain disappeared! Since a patch is difficult to adhere on the skin in irregular areas (such as an elbow), I opted for a cream. A compounded topical cream is easier because it's applied directly where needed and once applied you don't have to worry about it. As aside, topical pain relief is possible with a variety of other agents including those for nerve pain and inflammation. These may all be put into a topical cream or gel if a patient's needs require it.

If you suffer with a tendon injury, talk with your doctor, perhaps topical nitroglycerin cream is right for you. Our pharmacists are always available for consultation.



HEALTH DIMENSIONS COMPOUNDING PHARMACY



Other Alternative Pain Therapies: (Prescription Required)

Ketamine/Clonazepam/Gabapentin/Lidocaine Topical Gel

Ketoprofen/Cyclobenzaprine/Baclofen/Lidocaine Topical Gel

Ketoprofen Topical Gel