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Health Dimensions Wellness News

MAY 2008

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Special

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Solutions

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Alternative Pain Therapies



Scott Popyk, R.Ph. FIACP
Founder

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.

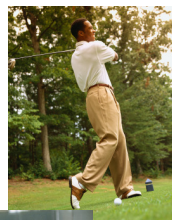
Often, the same medications that a patient may take orally can be applied topically. For instance, some oral medications cause confusion, forgetfulness and drowsiness. The same drug, compounded in a special cream delivers medication through the skin to provide needed relief and reduced side-effects. 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

Treatment for "Tennis" and "Golfers" Elbow

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.



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

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

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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 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.

(*Sources available upon request.)

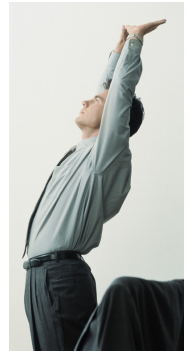
Eight Simple Stretches You Can Do Anywhere!

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is one way of saying that the best way to feel your best is to prevent injuries from happening. These 8 stretches will go along way in preventing current flare-ups and any future problems you may have. *

- **Bend forward.** Sitting on the edge of your chair with your feet flat on the floor, lean forward until your chest rests over your knees. Let your arms hang loosely, fingertips on the floor.
- **Act like a flamingo.** While standing, hold on to the back of your chair and grasp your right ankle with your left hand. Keep your hips facing straight ahead and pull your ankle up toward your buttocks as far as you can. Hold, then repeat with the other leg.
- **Stand in the corner.** Stand 24 inches or less from the corner of a room and place your forearms flat on each wall at shoulder height. Place your feet together, lean forward and touch your nose to the corner, like a push-up.
- **Cross your arms.** Bring your left arm, elbow bent, across your chest, parallel to the floor. Use your right hand to pull your left arm further across your body. Repeat with your other arm.
- **Stretch your neck.** Reach your right over your head and gently grasp the left side of your head. Gently pull your

head away from your left shoulder with your hand. Repeat with other side of your head.

- **Scratch your back.** Reach down the middle of your back with you left hand, pointing your elbow toward the ceiling. Gently push your elbow down with your right hand for a deeper stretch. Repeat with your other arm.
- **Shrug, roll and move your shoulders.** Lift your shoulders up to your ears by squeezing your shoulder blades together, pause for 10 seconds, then release. Put your hands on your waist and slowly circle your shoulders forward 10 times. Repeat this movement backwards as well.
- **Do the twist.** Sitting in your chair, cross your right knee over the left knee. Place your left hand on the outside of your right thigh and your right hand on your right armrest or on your desk. While sitting up straight, press your left hand into your right thigh and gently twist to the right. Look over your shoulder and hold. Repeat in the other direction.



* As with any exercise, you should consult with your physician before you do these stretches.

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Ends May 30, 2008

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