



WESTERN NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION

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Volume 21

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A newsletter for members of Western Neuropathy Association (WNA)

EXERCISE MAY HELP YOU BETTER TOLERATE PAIN

Haley Weiss, Time.com Health-Exercise & Fitness, May 30, 2023

Chronic pain is now more prevalent in the U.S. than either depression or diabetes. It can be persistent and hard to treat—but two recent studies, one about a potential intervention and another about chronic pain’s origins, shed light on the increasingly common condition.

Research published May 24 in the journal *Plos ONE* suggests that even though exercise may be the last thing a person living with pain wants to do, it could be a critical element to recovery. Using data from a large Norwegian population study of 10,732 adults, researchers at the University Hospital of North Norway in Tromsø analyzed people’s self-reported activity levels and their pain tolerance (measured by submerging people’s hands in ice water and having them rank their pain on a scale). People were surveyed twice, about eight years apart.

Those with more active lifestyles were found to be more tolerant to pain—and the more people said they exercised over the course of the study, the more their capacity for enduring pain grew. When both survey years were taken into account, those who had increased their levels of physical activity in the interim period reported greater pain tolerance over time. It’s possible, the authors write, that moving more frequently could be used as a “non-pharmacological pathway towards reducing or preventing chronic pain.”

One reason why pain is difficult to treat is because scientists don’t yet fully understand how the body perceives and regulates it. That picture has become slightly clearer in recent years, primarily thanks to the 2021 Nobel Prize-winning discovery of temperature and pressure receptors in the skin that trigger the neurological signals we understand as acute pain. But chronic pain has always been more complicated, and the ties it shares with conditions such as mental health disorders point to more complex origins.

In another study, published May 22 in the journal *Nature Neuroscience*, researchers glimpsed into the brain activity of people experiencing chronic pain. Their findings confirm that acute and chronic pain trigger different signals in the brain.

Rather than rely on traditional brain-scan methods that require complex equipment and can only capture short bursts of information, a team of neurologists at the University of California, San Francisco surgically embedded small devices into the brains of patients with chronic nerve pain. The devices monitored signals sent through two brain regions: the anterior cingulate cortex, an area understood to be critical to the emotional element of pain, and the orbitofrontal cortex, an area suggested to play a role in pain’s intensity. For several months, participants tracked their symptoms and flares of pain, which the researchers then cross-referenced with quantifiable data provided by recordings of brain activity. They found that neural activity in the orbitofrontal cortex lingered longer than activity in other regions, suggesting that some current medications used to treat chronic pain may not be providing the most effective relief.

The researchers conclude that brain activity could be used to predict and measure chronic pain waves. The Norwegian study, meanwhile, is a good reminder that lifestyle interventions will always be a critical part of addressing certain chronic illnesses.

PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY SUPPORT GROUPS

AUGUST 2023 SCHEDULE

Encourage, inform, share, support, and hope.

*Join a meeting to help others, learn something new, and/or share experiences.
In-person or virtual – connect to others with peripheral neuropathy*

Virtual Peripheral Neuropathy Support Groups

Contact Katherine Stenzel at klstenzel@hotmail.com for the Zoom link

Or go to join.zoom.us and enter the meeting ID and Passcode

August 12 2nd Saturday Support Group

11:00am-1:00pm PST/1:00pm-3:00pm CST, Meeting ID: 856 7106 1474, Passcode: 114963

Host – Katherine Stenzel, klstenzel@hotmail.com

August 16 3rd Wednesday Support Group

10:00am-noon PST/12:00pm-2:00pm CST, Meeting ID: 833 4473 0364 / Passcode: 341654

Host – Glenn Ribotsky, glenntaj@yahoo.com

August 26 4th Saturday Support Group – Open Discussion

11:00am-1:00pm PST/1:00pm-3:00pm CST, Meeting ID: 851 7949 9276 / Passcode: 159827

Host – John Phillips, johnphillips.wna@gmail.com

In-Person Peripheral Neuropathy Support Groups

Auburn CA Support Group – No meetings in July, August and September

Contact: Sharlene McCord (530) 878-8392, Kathy Clemens (916) 580-9449, kaclemens@earthlink.net

Santa Cruz CA Support Group – Meetings in Odd Months (No August meeting)

Contact: Mary Ann Leer (831) 477-1239

2023 WNA Board of Directors

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Katherine Stenzel
Editor

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FROM THE PRESIDENT Pam Hart, WNA President

A great practice to make your day more pleasant is to look for and find the little, simple pleasures throughout your day. These are not big things or expensive things, but they are big in terms of their ability to shift your energy in a big way. Being grateful is the first step in appreciating the wonder around us. It helps us to focus on the positive.

Here is how I like to start my day. Upon waking, I snuggle down in my bed and give thanks for a good night's rest, (yes, I am grateful to be alive!!!) for a new day that can bring all sorts of surprises or just routine (which is comforting in itself), for the luxury and comfort of my bed and for the warmth of my bedding. I am grateful that I have a safe place to sleep and can rest in peace.

Then I turn to my body and say good morning to my heart and ask it to be an expression of love throughout the day. I ask my mind to guide me with wisdom. I ask my bones and muscles to work together in harmony to provide me with mobility and strength. By the time my feet hit the floor I am energized with love and appreciation.

By the time I have taken my shower I am ready to look for more simple pleasures to brighten my day and the possibilities are endless. Using my favorite perfume or essential oils helps to put me in an appreciative mode. Having a favorite breakfast is sure to satisfy me and start me out on the right path for the day. I am sure you can find your own list of simple pleasures (mental or written). Gratitude is a spiritual enzyme that magnifies all the good in your life. I hope you can use some of these simple ways to celebrate life resulting in a positive outlook.

I am grateful for WNA and the wonderful people that make up our membership. The diverse group encourages us to celebrate with others when successes are found. Sometimes just being able to speak to our issues is the positive outlet we need.

SIT-TO-STAND EXERCISE Elsevier Health, April 10, 2022

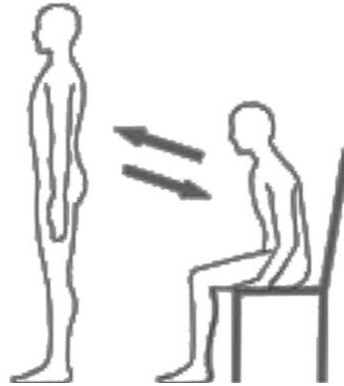
The sit-to-stand exercise (also known as the chair stand or chair rise exercise) strengthens your lower body and helps you maintain or improve your mobility and independence. The end goal is to do the sit-to-stand exercise without using your hands. This will be easier as you become stronger. You should always talk with your health care provider before starting any exercise program, especially if you have had recent surgery. *(Editor's Note: Several virtual support group attendees practice this exercise for balance)*

WHAT THE SIT-TO-STAND EXERCISE DOES

The sit-to-stand exercise helps to strengthen the muscles in your thighs and the muscles in the center of your body that give you stability (core muscles).

HOW TO DO THE SIT-TO-STAND EXERCISE

1. Sit toward the front edge of a sturdy chair without armrests. Your knees should be bent and your feet should be flat on the floor and shoulder-width apart and underneath your hips.
2. Place your hands lightly on each side of the seat. Keep your back and neck as straight as possible, with your chest slightly forward.
3. Breathe in slowly. Lean forward and slightly shift your weight to the front of your feet.
4. Breathe out as you slowly stand up. Try not to support any weight with your hands.
5. Stand and pause for a full breath in and out.
6. Breathe in as you sit down slowly. Tighten your core and abdominal muscles to control your lowering as much as possible. You should lower yourself back to the chair slowly, not just drop back into the seat.
7. Breathe out slowly.
8. Do this exercise 10–15 times. If needed, do it fewer times until you build up strength.
9. Rest for 1 minute, then do another set of 10–15 repetitions.



To change the difficulty of the sit-to-stand exercise

- If the exercise is too difficult, use a chair with sturdy armrests, and push off the armrests to help you come to the standing position. You can also use the armrests to help slowly lower yourself back to sitting. As this gets easier, try to use your arms less. You can also place a firm cushion or pillow on the chair to make the surface higher.
- If this exercise is too easy, do not use your arms to help raise or lower yourself. You can also wear a weighted vest, use hand weights, increase your repetitions, or try a lower chair.

GENERAL TIPS

- You may feel tired when starting an exercise routine. This is normal.
- You may have muscle soreness that lasts a few days. This is normal. As you get stronger, you may not feel muscle soreness.
- Use smooth, steady movements.
- Do not hold your breath during strength exercises. This can cause unsafe changes in your blood pressure.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose, and breathe out slowly through your mouth.

SUMMARY

- Strengthening your lower body is an important step to help you move safely and independently.
- The sit-to-stand exercise helps strengthen the muscles in your thighs and core.
- You should always talk with your health care provider before starting any exercise program. This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

Health Care Challenges Websites (updated)

SHIPs

State Health Insurance Assistance Programs
www.shiphelp.org
(877) 839-2675

Help for navigating the complexities of Medicare. Search the website for your specific state program.

Medicare Rights Center

www.medicarerights.org
(800) 333-4114

Non-profit that works to ensure access to affordable health care for older adults and people with disabilities.

Medicare

www.medicare.org
(800) MEDICARE
(800) 633-4227

Get started with Medicare, options, news.

Benefits and Insurance for People with Disabilities

www.usa.gov/disability-benefits-insurance
(844) USAGOV1
(844) 872-4681

For those with a disability, learn how government programs and services can help in your daily life.

9 HERBS AND SPICES THAT FIGHT INFLAMMATION

Ryan Raman, MS, RD, Healthline.com, February 16, 2023

Some herbs and spices, like ginger and black pepper, contain anti-inflammatory compounds that may reduce inflammation and benefit your overall health. Inflammation is the body's way of fighting infections and healing. However, in some situations, inflammation can get out of hand and last longer than necessary. This is called chronic inflammation, and studies have linked it to many diseases, including diabetes and cancer.

Diet plays a crucial role in your health. What you eat, including various herbs and spices, can affect inflammation in your body. This article reviews the science behind 9 herbs and spices that may help fight inflammation. It's worth noting that many studies in this article talk about molecules called inflammatory markers. These indicate the presence of inflammation. Thus, an herb that reduces inflammatory markers in the blood likely reduces inflammation.

1. Ginger

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) is a delicious spice with a peppery yet sweet flavor. You can enjoy this spice in various ways, such as fresh, dried, or powdered. Outside of ginger's culinary uses, people have used it for thousands of years in traditional medicine to heal numerous conditions. These include colds, migraines, nausea, arthritis, and high blood pressure. Ginger contains more than 100 active compounds, such as gingerol, shogaol, zingiberene, and zingerone, to name a few. These are likely responsible for its health effects, including helping reduce inflammation in the body.

Ginger is also incredibly versatile and easy to incorporate into many dishes, such as stir-fries, stews, and salads. Alternatively, you can purchase ginger supplements from health food stores or online.

2. Garlic

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) is a popular spice with a strong smell and taste. People have used it in traditional medicine for thousands of years to treat arthritis, coughs, constipation, infections, toothaches, and more. Most of the health benefits of garlic come from its sulfur compounds which appear to have anti-inflammatory properties.

An analysis of 17 high quality studies found that people who took garlic supplements experienced significantly reduced blood levels of the inflammatory marker CRP. However, aged garlic extract was more effective and reduced blood levels of both CRP and TNF- α . Other studies have shown that garlic may help raise antioxidants in the body, such as glutathione (GSH) and superoxide dismutase (SOD), while regulating inflammation-promoting markers.

Garlic is versatile and easy to add to your dishes. Alternatively, you can purchase concentrated garlic and aged garlic extract supplements in health food stores and online.

3. Turmeric

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) is a spice popular in Indian cuisine that people have used since ancient times. It's packed with over 300 active compounds. The main one is an antioxidant called curcumin, which has powerful anti-inflammatory properties. Numerous studies have shown that curcumin can block the activation of NF- κ B, a molecule that activates genes that promote inflammation.

An analysis of 15 high quality studies followed 1,223 people who took 112–4,000 mg of curcumin daily for periods of 3 days to 36 weeks. Taking curcumin significantly reduced inflammatory markers compared with taking a placebo. Studies in people with osteoarthritis have found that taking curcumin supplements provided pain relief similar to that of the common nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) ibuprofen and diclofenac.

Unfortunately, turmeric only contains 3% curcumin by weight, and your body doesn't absorb it well. It's best to take curcumin with black pepper, as the latter contains a compound called piperine, which can increase curcumin absorption by up to 2,000%.

If you're looking to take curcumin for its anti-inflammatory properties, it's best to purchase curcumin supplements, ideally ones that also contain black pepper extract or piperine. You can purchase them from health food stores and online.

4. Cardamom

Cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*) is a spice native to Southeast Asia. It has a complex sweet, spicy flavor. Research suggests that taking cardamom supplements may reduce inflammatory markers. Additionally, one study found that cardamom raised

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9 Herbs And Spices That Fight Inflammation – Continued from page 4

antioxidant status by 90%. An 8-week study in 80 people with prediabetes found that taking 3 grams of cardamom daily significantly reduced inflammatory markers compared with a placebo.

The rich, complex flavor of cardamom makes it an excellent addition to curries and stews. The spice is also available as a supplement in powder or capsule form.

5. Black pepper

Black pepper (*Piper nigrum* L.) is known as the king of spices, as its popular worldwide. Traditionally, people used black pepper to treat certain health conditions, such as asthma, diarrhea, and many other gastric ailments. Research suggests that black pepper and its main active compound piperine may play a role in reducing inflammation in the body.

In animals with arthritis, piperine helped reduce joint swelling and inflammation markers. In both mice with asthma and seasonal allergies, piperine helped reduce redness, the frequency of sneezing, various inflammatory markers as well as the antibody immunoglobulin E. However, limited human research has been conducted on the anti-inflammatory properties of black pepper. Scientists need to do more research to explore its effects.

Black pepper is widely available and easy to add to your diet. Try seasoning your cooking with a dash of ground black pepper. It pairs nicely with veggies, meat, fish, poultry, and pasta dishes.

6. Ginseng

Ginseng is a plant people have used in Asia for thousands of years, treasuring it for its medicinal properties. The two most popular ginseng types are Asian ginseng (*Panax ginseng*) and American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*). They vary in their effects and amounts of active compounds. Asian ginseng is reportedly more invigorating, while American ginseng is thought to be more relaxing. Ginseng has been associated with many health benefits, mainly due to its active compounds called ginsenosides. Their effects include reducing signs of inflammation in the body.

An analysis of 9 studies looked at 420 participants with elevated blood levels of the inflammatory marker CRP. Those who took 300–4,000 mg of ginseng per day over 4–24.8 weeks had significantly reduced CRP levels. The researchers suggested that ginseng's anti-inflammatory properties come from its ability to suppress a chemical messenger that activates genes that promote inflammation. Similarly, another analysis of 7 studies including 409 people found that taking 1,000–3,000 mg of ginseng daily over 3–32 weeks significantly reduced inflammatory markers.

Ginseng is easy to add to your diet. You can stew its roots into a tea or add them to recipes such as soups or stir-fries. Alternatively, you can take ginseng extract as a supplement. It's available in capsule, tablet, or powder form at health food stores and online.

7. Green tea

Green tea (*Camellia sinensis* L.) is a popular herbal tea that people often tout for its health benefits. This plant is packed with healthy compounds called polyphenols – specifically EGCG. Studies have linked these compounds to benefits for the brain and heart. They may also help people lose body fat and reduce inflammation.

Animal and test-tube studies have shown that EGCG helped reduce signs of inflammation associated with the inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD,) ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease. One study followed people with ulcerative colitis who did not respond well to conventional treatments. Taking an EGCG-based supplement daily for 56 days improved symptoms by 58%, compared with no improvement in the placebo group.

Green tea polyphenols also appear to be beneficial for inflammatory health conditions, such as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, gum diseases, and even certain cancers.

Green tea leaves are widely available and easy to brew into a delicious tea. Alternatively, you could also try purchasing matcha powder or green tea extract supplements.

8. Rosemary

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) is a delicious, fragrant herb native to the Mediterranean. Research suggests that rosemary may help reduce inflammation. This is believed to be due to its high content of polyphenols, particularly rosmarinic acid and carnosic acid.

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■ NEW FORM OF BOTOX COULD HELP TO BEAT THE CHRONIC PAIN CAUSED BY DIABETES, CANCER AND MS

Tom Bawden, Science & Environment Correspondent, [inews.co.uk](https://www.inews.co.uk), April 11, 2023

A new form of Botox has been developed that could relieve chronic pain and be available to the public within five years, scientists say. The re-engineered Botox would be able to treat the shooting neuropathic pain due to nerve injury from disease, trauma and infection such as stroke, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, cancer, shingles and surgery. It could also help with pain relating to Parkinson's disease and epilepsy and may potentially even alleviate some pain not arising from nerve injury, such as some migraine symptoms, the researchers say. The Botox has been modified so that it doesn't paralyze the muscles as happens when it's used to smooth out wrinkles in cosmetic procedures.

The new treatment was found to be highly effective in rats, cutting their pain by 80 per cent, according to a study published in the journal *Life Science Alliance*. And the researchers said it might be even more effective in humans – although they note that some pain is necessary to ensure people protect their injuries, as “pain essentially aids healing”.

Tests are now planned for treating dogs and researchers are preparing to carry out clinical trials on people by 2028 which, they hope, will lead to the Botox injections becoming available in the next five years.

9 Herbs And Spices That Fight Inflammation – Continued from page 5

A 16-week study in 62 people with osteoarthritis found that drinking a daily tea that was high in rosmarinic acid significantly reduced pain and stiffness, as well as increased mobility in the knees, compared with a placebo. In test-tube and animal studies, rosmarinic acid reduced inflammation markers in many inflammatory conditions, including atopic dermatitis, osteoarthritis, asthma, gum disease, and others.

Rosemary works well as a seasoning and pairs nicely with several types of meat, such as beef, lamb, and chicken. You can purchase rosemary as a dried herb, fresh or dried leaves, or dried, ground powder.

9. Cinnamon

Cinnamon is a delicious spice made from the barks of trees from the *Cinnamomum* family. The two main types of cinnamon are Ceylon cinnamon, also called “true” cinnamon, and Cassia cinnamon, which is the most commonly available type. People have prized cinnamon for its health properties for thousands of years.

An analysis of 12 studies in over 690 participants found that taking 1,500–4,000 mg of cinnamon daily for 10–110 days significantly reduced the inflammatory markers CRP and MDA, compared with a placebo. Also, cinnamon raised the body's antioxidant levels. Interestingly, the analysis found that only Cassia cinnamon, the more common variety of cinnamon, reduced both CRP and MDA levels. Ceylon cinnamon only reduced MDA levels. Similarly, an analysis of 6 studies in 285 people found that taking 1,200–3,000 mg of cinnamon daily for 8–24 weeks significantly reduced CRP levels. This effect was especially apparent in conditions in which CRP levels were high, such as NAFLD, type 2 diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis.

Notably, while cinnamon is safe in small amounts, too much cinnamon can be dangerous. Cinnamon, especially the more common Cassia variety, has high levels of coumarin. This compound has been linked to liver damage when people consume too much of it. Cinnamon's tolerable daily intake is 0.05 mg per pound (0.1 mg per kg) of body weight. One teaspoon (2.5 grams) of Cassia cinnamon contains 7–18 mg of coumarin. This means the average adult should consume no more than 1 teaspoon (2.5 grams) of cinnamon per day.

It's best to season with cinnamon sparingly to avoid its side effects.

The bottom line

Inflammation is a natural process that can raise the risk of health complications when it continues for too long. This condition is commonly known as chronic inflammation. Fortunately, what you eat can help reduce inflammation in your body. The herbs and spices listed in this article can help keep inflammation at bay while adding enjoyable flavors to your diet.

■ **RESOURCE: COMPLEMENTARY HEALTH APPROACHES FOR PAIN RELIEF** National Institute of Health

NIH, the National Institute of Health, has two resources that discuss complementary approaches for pain relief. The first is a free 50-page e-book that summarizes the evidence behind different complementary approaches for pain relief. These include acupuncture, massage therapy, spinal manipulation, and more. There's also a chapter on music-based interventions for pain relief.

You can download the PDF of this free 50-page e-book by going to:

<https://files.nccih.nih.gov/pain-ebook-2023-03-508.pdf>

The second is online information about complementary approaches for chronic pain. It has the same information as the e-book – just more generalized (not as much detail).

The online information can be found at:

<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/chronic-pain-what-you-need-to-know>

I looked at both and personally prefer the e-book as it does have more detail. Also, since it is downloaded to your computer, you can review it at any time, even if you are not online.

■ **NEW BOARD DIRECTOR - SHANA PHELPS**

The WNA Board of Directors has increased by 1 to 7!! Shana Phillips, from Chicago, Illinois, was approved by the Board of Directors in their June meeting to become a Western Neuropathy Association Director! Shana was diagnosed in 2020 with neuropathy that affects her whole body. By using her experience in marketing and teaching, Shana hopes to foster connections, support others, and raise awareness of neuropathy. Next time you see Shana in a virtual Peripheral Neuropathy Support Group meeting, congratulate her on volunteering to help the WNA continue their mission of providing hope to those who suffer from peripheral neuropathy.

■ **PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY VIRTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS KEEP GROWING** Katherine Stenzel, WNA Director, Editor

WNA's virtual support groups for peripheral neuropathy continue to increase in attendees!

The **2nd Saturday group** is the original Houston in-person group that converted to virtual meetings during the pandemic. Our first meeting in September 2020 was attended by 7, which was only slightly less than the last in-person meeting in January 2020 when 10 attended. As word spread about this virtual peripheral neuropathy support group, attendees continued to be from Houston with participation increasing with each meeting.

In 2021, people started attending from outside Houston which pushed attendance to the high 20s. The group decided at this time to add another meeting each month, and to expand the meeting time from one and a half hours to two hours. Luckily for me, John Phillips volunteered to host this second meeting, called the **4th Saturday Open Discussion**.

At the end of 2021, 37 people attended the 2nd Saturday November meeting and 35 attended the 4th Saturday November Open Discussion. Numbers continue in this area with attendance averaging from the mid-30s to mid-40s each session.

In 2022, Dr. Donovan could not continue his virtual peripheral neuropath support group, the former Monterrey CA support group, due to his health. He offered for me to take it over, which I did. I kept the same meeting day and time, with the name changing to the **3rd Wednesday Support Group**. The first meeting in March 2022 was attended by 17, and similar to the other meetings, current attendance is in the mid-30s to low-40s. And lucky for me again, Glenn Ribotsky had joined WNA and said "yes" to hosting this peripheral neuropathy support group.

Each support group session has new attendees who are looking for help with their particular peripheral neuropathy situation, strategies on how to cope with anxiety and depression, and deeper knowledge on this disease. All the group members come together to share what works for them, remembering that *"We are all an experiment of one."*



WESTERN NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION

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IN THIS ISSUE

What will you find interesting in this issue?

The Front-Page article is about exercise and how a clinical trial found that the more you exercise, the more you can tolerate pain. And it doesn't even have to be exercise but could simply be an active lifestyle. So like the song... "Move it, move it".

I included an in-depth article about spices and herbs that could lessen inflammation. Some people that have peripheral neuropathy report that an anti-inflammation diet has lessened their symptoms. Maybe this could work for you too.

Balance – let's talk balance. This always comes up in the virtual support group meetings. The Sit-And-Stand exercise has helped some attendees with their balance. Comprehensive instructions are included for this simple yet effective technique.

And for pain relief, the NIH, National Institute of Health, has two new guides that detail non-drug techniques to help relieve pain. Maybe there is something in these guides that can help you.

Alright – there is exercise and pain, balance exercise, pain relief guides and diet. Let me know if you found any of these interesting. I enjoy hearing from you, my readers.

Katherine
klstenzel@hotmail.com



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Our mission is to provide support, information and referral to people with neuropathy and to those who care about them, to inform and connect with the health care community, and to support research.

Dues - \$30 a year

All contributions and dues are tax-deductible.

We are supported by dues-paying members, contributions by members and friends, and occasionally, small grants and fundraisers.

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