

Device Your Way Out of Pain

By Heather Bremner Claverie



TRYING TO get through the day while combating aches can be, well, quite a pain. Unfortunately, relief isn't always as simple as popping a few aspirin. And, while prescription medication can help, the side effects are too severe for some, and painkillers alone aren't enough for others. That's when medical devices enter the picture. When used either alone or in combination with prescribed medication and/or other therapies, many of these tools spell relief.

When Pain Becomes Chronic

There's pain and then there's chronic pain. While pain is the body's way of alerting us that something's wrong, chronic pain can occur in a variety of areas and last months. Chronic pain can spring without an apparent cause, but it usually follows an injury or health condition.

Currently, 133 million Americans, or nearly half of the population, suffer from at least one chronic disease, and the number is growing, according to the National Health Council. The nearly 24 million individuals with autoimmune

diseases are regularly plagued by fatigue, recurrent infections and chronic pain. In addition, individuals who receive regular immune globulin treatments often are troubled by an array of side effects, including chronic pain. But throwing more medication at the problem is not always the best solution. Some patients may need to start looking for something that does more than just numb the pain.

Implantable Pain Relief

Sometimes a device is the best medicine. Portable, compact and noninvasive, patients are turning to various tools for drug-free answers to pain management. With price points ranging from \$40 to more than \$14,000, options are available for all budgets.

Spinal cord stimulators such as Medtronic's PrimeAdvanced SureScan MRI neurostimulator are popular drug-free options that aid pain management by sending mild electrical pulses to an area near the spine. These devices, which are implanted in the chest or abdomen, deliver pain-blocking pulses that travel between the spinal cord and the brain. Medtronic also offers the world's smallest implantable neurostimulator, the Intellis, designed to provide long-term pain relief. These pain management devices automatically adjust their stimulation based on patients' needs and communicate individuals' activity, giving patients a personalized and optimized experience.

On the other end of the spectrum is a drug pump. These devices are implanted in the abdomen and deliver

pain medication directly to the fluid around the spinal cord rather than the blood stream, freeing patients from pain with a small fraction of medication that's needed from an oral pill.

Unlike some irreversible surgeries, both neurostimulators and drug pumps can be shut off or removed, restoring patients' ability to resume everyday activities without the burden of oral pain medication monitoring.

Easy Pain Management

There are also a variety of ways to relieve pain without taking the surgical route. Systems that deliver laser therapy such as the handheld Activ Pro LaserStim device stimulate the spine and relieve pain. While these devices can cost as much as \$14,000, many chiropractors offer similar therapies.

For individuals suffering from migraines, a variety of affordable options are available. From a stylishly simple neck massage device to a funny-looking invention that reduces pressure inside the head, there are many affordable and effective ways to break free from the daily anguish of migraines.

And for the little ones breaking out in tears over the necessary evil of needles? Slap on a Buzzy and circumvent the ouch. Innovators are continually designing new ways to relieve the world of the suffering associated with pain and discomfort. 



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Laser Away the Pain

For noninvasive, drug-free pain relief, turn to the Activ Pro LaserStim, an FDA-approved cordless, portable laser therapy system that safely stimulates deep tissues, providing powerful pain relief with a single probe. Chiropractors use

this inflammation-reducing technology to increase the speed, quality and strength of repair in muscles, tendons, ligaments, connective tissues, bones, nerves and dermal tissues.

Request a quote online; www.multiradiance.com/chiropractic-products/mr5-activ-pro-laserstim/#

Stimulate the Senses

Pain doesn't just affect joints and limbs; it can also lead to insomnia and depression. That's why the Alpha-Stim is an effective option for both physical and mental issues. This compact, handheld device delivers advanced microcurrent electrical therapy directly to pain sites, providing lasting relief in minutes at home, work or on the go. Combine it with cranial electrotherapy stimulation to manage anxiety, insomnia and depression.

\$1,195; www.alpha-stim.com/product/alpha-stim-m-microcurrent-cranial-electrotherapy-stimulator



Shopping Guide to Pain Management



Take the Sting Away

Buzzy, a little bug-shaped device, delivers pain relief by confusing the body's nerves, dulling and eliminating the pain of a needle. Simply place the colorful, compact product under a standard tourniquet or above the injection location, and Buzzy will block the pain with a smile on its face the entire time. Plus, its animated features — choose from a bumble bee or a ladybug — make it ideal for young patients. The device features a 3-minute auto shutoff and two vibration settings.

\$44.95 for the mini and \$59.95 for the XL; [shop.paincarelabs.com/collections/buzzy% C2%AE](http://shop.paincarelabs.com/collections/buzzy%C2%AE)

Go for the Gold

Kerri Walsh knows a thing or two about pain. To deal with her sore and achy muscles, the Olympic beach volleyball player turns to Kinesiology Therapeutic (KT) Tape. Made of 100 percent synthetic fibers, KT Tape is a highly breathable, elastic sports tape designed to relieve pain while supporting muscles, tendons and ligaments. The tape will stay put comfortably for up to seven days. Make it a bundle with her pain-relief gel roll-on and ice/heat massage ball. *Kerri's KT Recovery Pro Bundle \$75.97; www.kttape.com/kerri-kt-recovery-pro-bundle*



Knead It Away

Get rid of migraines with the Neckstar, which combines low-frequency electrical impulses, consistent heat and TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) technology to provide instant relief from migraines, neck pain, arthritis, cervical pain, pinched nerves and more. The Neckstar offers three different massage variations with 15 levels of intensity and is available in cherry pink, ocean blue or polar white. *\$89.99; neckster.col/products/neckster-intelligent-neck-massager?gclid=CjwKCAjw1uiEBhBzEiwAO9B_Hf3aH_w9R09o-NFRm-nl-htfppMKzdoiDSVPd2YjLFGxdu87YV_rMBoC7w8QAuD_BwE*

Zök It Off

This funny-looking device is a serious solution for individuals suffering from migraines and headaches. By stimulating the tympanic membrane, which activates the trigeminal nerve and multiple cranial nerves, Zök naturally reduces tension and pressure inside the head. The makers of this easy-to-use, FDA-registered device are so confident it works wonders, they guarantee it. *\$39.95; zokrelief.com*

