



BACK TROUBLE

Safe solutions for nagging aches and pains

Back pain can make life downright miserable. It disrupts work, play, and rest, and it can be extremely difficult to live with. Unfortunately, this nefarious ailment strikes nearly everyone in some form or another, with 40 million Americans visiting a doctor for back pain each year. That's because a lot can go wrong with this important body part, and a problem in one area can impact the function of the back as a whole.

Your back is an extremely intricate machine, with highly interconnected parts including the spine, nerves, muscles, tendons, ligaments, and fascia. Seemingly simple movements can strain or tear a muscle which may cause inflammation, swelling, and nerve pain. Spinal cord compression may lead to nerve aggregation and muscle spasms. The truth is, what starts out as a small issue can become monumental rather quickly. Often, people suffering with back issues reach for over-the-counter medicines or turn to other conventional treatment methods. Yet, some of these options can cause more harm than good in the long run. The next time you find yourself reaching for a bottle of ibuprofen, naproxen, or aspirin to ease back pain, try some of these natural solutions instead.

Curcumin:

If you're familiar with natural health remedies, you're no stranger to curcumin—the compound in turmeric responsible for its unparalleled health benefits. While curcumin can benefit everything from arthritis to cardiovascular health, its true claim to fame is its ability to fight inflammation and pain throughout the body—including the back. A number of studies have shown that curcumin helps manage chronic and acute pain through multiple pathways. It does this by suppressing cytokines—substances secreted by the immune system that contribute to inflammation. Because of this, curcumin can help to reduce or eliminate numerous types of pain including joint pain, post-operative pain, neuropathic pain, and exercise-induced pain. When choosing a curcumin product, it's extremely important that the ingredients are highly absorbable. Look for a product that contains turmerones, which is a component of turmeric essential oil that aids in absorbability.



Boswellia:

Boswellia, also known as frankincense, is another potent pain-relieving botanical. Highly effective for back issues, boswellia contains a family of compounds called boswellic acids. The most active and beneficial of these is Acetyl-11-keto- β -boswellic acid (AKBA), and the best type of boswellia extract is standardized to include at least 10 percent AKBA. Interestingly, boswellia is best known for its ability to treat pain when combined with curcumin. Together, these two natural compounds reduce the activity of all the inflammatory pathways in the body, which in turn, greatly reduces pain. These botanicals are so effective when combined that they were found to be superior to the prescription drug celecoxib in a clinical trial researching osteoarthritis.

Comfrey Cream:

If you prefer a topical solution to your back pain, try a cream made from comfrey. This perennial herb has a long history of use for everything from treating wounds to preventing infection, but is particularly powerful for fighting pain—including nagging backaches. Comfrey relieves soreness,

White Willow Bark:

Referred to as “nature’s aspirin,” white willow bark extract is another excellent botanical for back pain. Ancient civilizations would make a tea of white willow bark to treat pain. Even Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, promoted its use for the relief of aches and discomfort. This highly regarded botanical contains salicin, which is the natural inspiration for acetylsalicylic acid, or as most people know it, aspirin. Salicin is responsible for lowering prostaglandins—hormone-

like compounds in the body that can cause inflammation, aches, and pains. Besides salicin, willow bark includes a combination of polyphenols that contribute to its pain-relieving properties. When looking for an effective white willow bark supplement, make sure it is standardized to at least 30 percent salicin for best results.

Devil’s Claw:

This herb has been used in Africa for centuries to relieve pain and stiffness. Devil’s claw is popular because of its ability to stop the activity of inflammatory enzymes in the body. This can help stop the deterioration of the joints—especially for individuals with rheumatoid and osteoarthritis. In a clinical study, devil’s claw was shown to be as effective in its pain-relieving ability as rofecoxib, a powerful prescription NSAID that was pulled off the market because of its lethal side effects. Devil’s claw has the same pain-relieving power, with none of the unwanted side effects. In addition to fighting inflammation, devil’s claw also helps regenerate the natural cushioning in the joints. This strengthens the extracellular matrix that acts like a shock absorber between the vertebrae by an average of 38 percent! Devil’s claw also boosts hyaluronic acid synthesis in chondrocytes—the cells that produce and maintain the natural cushioning cartilage between your vertebrae. If your back pain is due to rheumatoid or osteoarthritis, devil’s claw may be the perfect solution for you.

reduces inflammation and swelling, heals damaged tissue, and may even have the ability to help mend broken bones. When looking for a comfrey cream, it’s important to find one that is PA-free, meaning it doesn’t contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids—compounds that have been shown to damage the liver. There is a safe, effective, PA-free cream that contains a special cultivar known as Trauma Comfrey. This proprietary

cream was the focus of a study done on 215 people who experienced back pain whenever they moved. When compared to a placebo cream, the participants using the Trauma Comfrey cream reported significantly better pain relief and less inflammation. Trauma comfrey also works quickly. In a clinical study of exercise-induced muscle soreness, comfrey was shown to reduce pain in just 15 minutes!