

Alternatives to Opioids

Non-Opioid Medications

Advantages

Can control and alleviate mild to moderate pain with few side effects.
Can reduce exposure to opioids and dependency.

Disadvantages

May not be covered by insurance.
May not be effective for severe pain.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol)

Relieves mild-moderate pain, and treats headache, muscle aches, arthritis, backache, toothaches, colds and fevers.

Disadvantages

Overdoses can cause liver damage.

Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

Aspirin, Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), Naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn)

Relieves mild-moderate pain, and treats headache, muscle aches, arthritis, backache, toothaches, colds and fevers.

Disadvantages

Overdoses can cause liver damage.

Non-opioid Anesthesia

Opioids can be replaced with safer medications that block pain during and after surgery. A health care provider or an anesthesiologist can provide options and discuss side effects.

Therapies

Advantages

Can control and alleviate mild to moderate pain with few side effects.
Can reduce exposure to opioids and dependency.
Treatment targets the area of pain—not systemic.
Providers are licensed and regulated by the State of Florida (<https://appsmqa.doh.state.fl.us/MQASearchServices>) .

Disadvantages

May not be covered by insurance.
Relief from pain may not be immediate.
May not be effective for severe pain.

Cold and heat

Ice relieves pain and reduces inflammation and swelling of intense injuries; heat reduces muscle pain and stiffness. Can provide short-term and long-term relief from pain.

Disadvantages

Too much heat can increase swelling and inflammation.

Exercise and movement

Regular exercise and physical activity can relieve pain. Simply walking has benefits. Mind-body practices like yoga and tai chi incorporate breath control, meditation and movements to stretch and strengthen muscles.

Disadvantages

Maintaining daily exercise and overcoming barriers to exercise can be a challenge.

Sources: American College of Surgeons, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, Harvard Health and Wexner Medical Center (Ohio State University)