

Effective Natural Therapies for Pain

Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum discusses some of his favorite natural therapies for pain — from willow bark to passionflower.

By Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum
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PAIN-FREE 1-2-3

A Proven Program for Eliminating CHRONIC PAIN NOW!

Find the safest and most effective natural and prescription remedies

JACOB TEITELBAUM, M.D.
author of the bestselling *From Fatigued to Fantastic!*

"Pain Free 1-2-3," by Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, offers over 100 natural and prescription treatment ideas for pain.

Cover Courtesy McGraw-Hill



Pain Free 1-2-3 (McGraw-Hill, 2006) demonstrates the three critical components for healing tissue: getting optimum nutrition and sleep, correcting hormonal levels, and eliminating the factors that put stress on the body. Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum provides more than 100 treatments combining both natural and prescription approaches to guide you in aiding the body in healing, locating the source of pain and tailoring treatments for maximum effect. The excerpt below comes from chapter 11, "Natural Therapies."

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You can buy this book in the MOTHER EARTH NEWS store: [Pain Free 1-2-3](#).

Many natural therapies can be very helpful for pain. My three favorite pain-relieving herbals are willow bark, boswellia, and cherry. All three can be found in combination in the End Pain formula by Enzymatic Therapy (found in Appendix B of the book, which can be purchased by clicking on the link above). Begin with two to four tablets three times a day, as needed, until maximum benefit is achieved (approximately four to six weeks), and then you can use the lowest effective dose. For acute pain three or four tablets at a time is best. Let's look more closely at these three herbals.

Willow Bark

Willow bark is the original source of aspirin, but when used as the entire herb it has been found to be much safer than aspirin and more effective. The active ingredient is salicin, and willow bark has been shown to be effective in both osteoarthritis and back pain. People who are severely allergic to aspirin (those with aspirin-induced asthma or anaphylaxes, which are very unusual) should not use willow bark. Like aspirin and Celebrex, willow bark acts as a

cyclooxygenase enzyme (COX) inhibitor, decreasing inflammation.

There is clearly a combination of other elements in willow bark that markedly enhances its effectiveness and safety — which can be a major benefit over aspirin and NSAIDs such as Motrin. Unfortunately aspirin and NSAIDs cause an enormous amount of gastritis and ulcer bleeding to the extent of killing fifteen thousand to twenty thousand Americans yearly! The studies on willow bark are quite consistent in showing its effectiveness and safety in reducing pain. Let's look at some of the research.

In one study, 210 patients with severe chronic low back pain were randomly assigned to receive an oral willow bark extract, with either 120 mg (low dose) or 240 mg (high dose) of salicin, or placebo, in a four-week blinded trial. In the last week of treatment, 39 percent of the group receiving high-dose extract were pain free; 21 percent of the group receiving low-dose extract were pain free; and only 6 percent of the placebo group were pain free. The response in the high-dose group was evident after only one week of treatment. Researchers then studied 451 patients who came in with low back pain in an open study, using salicin 240 mg, 120 mg, or standard orthopedic/NSAID care for four weeks. Forty percent of the patients in the 240 mg group and 19 percent in the 120 mg group were pain free after four weeks. In the standard treatment group, using standard medications, only 18 percent were pain free. The study showed that willow bark was not only far more effective and safer than standard prescription therapies, it also decreased the cost of care by approximately 40 percent!

Another review found that willow bark extract has anti-inflammatory activities comparable to much higher doses of acetylsalicylic acid/aspirin, and it reduces pain and fever as well. In pharmacologically active doses, no adverse effects on the stomach lining (indigestion, ulcers) were observed, in contrast to aspirin.

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