



The Northern California Chapter of The Neuropathy Association

Hope through caring and education

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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 to connect with the health care community, and to support research.

COMPLEMENTARY and ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS for NEUROPATHY – “Almost From A to Z” - As Reported by NCCNA Members

The treatments profiled here have been recommended by one or more persons in one or more of the NCCNA support groups. Mindful that not everything works for every one, or all the time, the rule of caveat emptor (“Let the buyer beware.”) applies in evaluating these product/treatment options and you may want to discuss their use with your primary care doctor or neurologist. Also, please remember there can be a placebo effect of up to 50%, so purported product effectiveness needs to take this into account. If you have found something that helps you, but is not on this list, please send information about the product to info@pnhelp.org.

We have not listed traditional, generally prescribed medications for neuropathy, unless many reported finding them particularly helpful, such as the relatively new medications that FDA has specifically approved for diabetic neuropathy and post herpetic neuralgia, but which are also being used for other neuropathies at doctor discretion. The list does include many over-the-counter analgesics and non-medical treatments with no FDA approval beyond assumed general safety and/or no particular medical community recognition, but which some with neuropathy have found helpful for their own neuropathic and/or other chronic pain symptoms, such as muscle strain, arthritis and fibromyalgia. And we need to understand that, as neuropathy can affect potentially all parts of our bodies, including joints, tendons, and other connective tissues usually associated with non-neuropathic pain dynamics, these may be very relevant to us. (See the **NINDS** booklet on **PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY** for a brief discussion of this phenomenon.) **Consider use of these various products as part of your experimentation to find the right combination of resources to maximize your functionality and minimize your discomfort and disability with neuropathy.**

(The information contained herein is not intended to substitute for informed medical advice. You should not use this information to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease without consulting a qualified health care provider. The Northern California chapter The Neuropathy (NCCNA) does not endorse any treatments, medications, articles, abstracts or products discussed herein. You are strongly encouraged to consult a neurologist with any questions or comments you have regarding your condition. The best care can only be given by a qualified provider who knows you personally.)

Absorbine, Jr. – Rub this on the balls of your feet bedtime to reduce neuropathic distress. It is available in most drug or grocery stores; this liquid has been used for many years to treat muscle strain.

Acupuncture/Acupressure – Using tiny sterilized needles or finger/hand hand pressure at specific sites to provide relief of pain and inflammation. Therapists using these methods can be found in the telephone directory and may be associated with other complementary treatment practitioners. Some have found it very helpful in reducing neuropathic pain.

Aleve – Over the counter product that is effective for relieving different types of pain.

Alpha Lipoic Acid – ALA is a universal anti-oxidant. It works in all types of cells to put down free radicals. It also helps to refresh other antioxidants like Vitamin E and C, CoQ10, and glutathione. ALA has been used in Europe many years to treat diabetes by reducing blood sugar levels and diabetic neuropathy reducing DPN symptoms. (It has been found effective with other types of neuropathy.) Recommended dosage: 600 mg. - 300 in the morning and 300 at night. It can be obtained in pharmacies and health food stores but possibly at a lower cost at Vitacost:

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1-800-793-2601 or www.Vitacost.com. Two bottles of 120 (240 total) \$12.69 each plus \$4.95 for shipping no matter the size of your order is \$30.33. The recommended choice when asked is NSI Alpha Lipoic Acid, 300 mg. - 120 caps. Swanson: 1-800-437-4148 Item #D4SWU136. This is for bottles of 60 of the 300 mg. capsules. Each bottle is \$9.89. You save on shipping and handling by ordering more. So it is \$9.89 x 3 - \$29.67 - \$4.95 (S/H) - # \$34.64 is the total. The Vitacost product is reported to be a smaller, easier to swallow capsule. It is important to take the capsules with food and best to not lie down immediately after taking it. Like other vitamins or supplements, you want to let it begin digesting before changing its environment.

Artalgia – This is available only from www.burningneuropathy for \$17 for product, postage and handling. It is a liquid homeopathic developed after many years of research by Florida podiatrist **Todd Horton** that combines some 17 herbs that helps with burning, coldness and other neuropathy symptoms. There are many testimonials at the web site specifying the many ways it has been helpful for Pners. Several drops of the liquid are placed under the tongue for quick absorption into the blood stream. Artalgia has an offensive, very strong flavor that goes away very quickly, but it can also be diluted with fruit juice. For many users, Artalgia has a cumulative effect that restores restful sleep, reduces pain/burning sensations, and reduces the need for some or all traditional neuropathy medications with side effects. Martha Chandley reports that it kept her sane during her worst months of diabetic neuropathy with burning to her knees 24/7. She particularly recommends the product for those suffering with **burning** sensations.

B-12 Deficiency Correction Options – The most common manifestations of B-12 deficiency are numbness and tingling sensations with an unsteady gait. But it can also produce atrophy of the optic nerve with visual loss, mental changes related to dementia, and pernicious anemia. Chronic use of metformin and various malabsorption conditions such as diverticulitis, post-bariatric surgery and celiac disease are also commonly found with B-12 deficiencies. For many seniors, use of traditional B-12 tablets is inadequate and may need to have regular B-12 injections and/or use sublingual lozenges of B-12 to get the nutrient quickly into the blood stream. As early diagnosis and proper treatment of B-12 deficiency neuropathy can be significantly reversed, it is essential that proper diagnostic tests be done. If you've been diagnosed as "idiopathic" and have the above symptoms, please ask your doctor for the methylmelonic test as others more commonly used can produce "false negative" results. The Methyl B12 1000 MCG, Methylcobalamin lozenges are available in health food stores; your doctor would need to provide and/or prescribe the injections. Don't experiment. Let your doctor guide you as some people have a high level of B12.

Benfotiamine – Go to www.benfotamine.org for information about this vitamin B-1 product that has been found to be particularly helpful for controlling blood sugar levels for diabetics and reducing diabetic neuropathy symptoms. It has been used extensively in Europe for many years and is increasingly recommended in the US. While rare today, B-1 deficiency can produce painful sensory neuropathy, beginning in the feet, followed by generalized muscle weakness, including facial muscles.

Bowen Therapy – This is a unique quasi-massage technique developed in Australia with substantial adoption by specially trained American practitioners. There is no easy way to explain what Bowen is or how and why it works, but there are several web sites with information and most yellow pages will include a list of area practitioners, usually in the massage therapy section.

Borage Oil and Evening Primrose Oil – These were introduced to the PN community by **John Senneff** in his book, **Nutrients for Neuropathy** as a gamma linoleic acid source for omega 6 oils, one of the "good" type oils, when used in a proper ratio with the more critical Omega 3 oils. Both are readily available at most drug and health food stores.

Capsaicin – This topical cream uses chili pepper oils to produce heat that, when absorbed into the skin, provides pain relief for some. One product is CAPSIN in 2-ounce roll-on applicator bottles. (1-866-779-3310. Mention you are in a PN support group). Another product is Zostrix available over the counter at pharmacies. Another is Pryde Pharmaceutical Corp, (866) 779-3310. Like Zostrix, it is a lotion in an easy to apply format. Most people find the heat too difficult to handle, but it can provide some real relief if the heat can be tolerated.

Castiva arthritis warming and cooling creams – The product is made of a natural castor oil base to help with joint pain and it should be remembered that some neuropathies can produce joint pain.

Castor Oil – Castor Oil put on topically has been found to aid in pain control. Some doctors have recommended it and it is reported that a number of people have found castor oil helps.

Chamomile Foot Bath – (Dorothea Winslow shared this one to complement the Nettle Leaves Foot Bath). Boil two quarts of water and then remove from stove. Add 1/3 cup dry chamomile flowers (obtained from a health food store) and let steep for 2-3 hours until cool. Pour into a foot bath tub, soaking your feet for 30 minutes. You can follow this by rubbing chamomile oil acquired at Grandpa's Compounding Pharmacy in Placerville, into your feet. She uses this every night to "calm her nerves" by educing her pain levels quite substantially.

CMO Cream – CMO Cream is soothing cream to rub into sore joints and muscles. This is a scientifically advanced formula containing SMO, MSM, PPG-2, vitamin E, and glycerin in a rich and luxurious emollient base. Natural Products Center (800) 301-3337. Price is\$24.95/4 oz jar + \$5.25 SH - \$30.20 (compare with Nikken)

Compounded medication products –Many of the traditionally prescribed oral medications for neuropathy have difficult side effects, but traditional OTC analgesics may not be helpful enough. Consequently, many neuropathy patients are taking advantage of the possibilities for specially created medications that combine the active analgesic benefits of such products as Neurontin or Elavil with nerve health supplement ingredients into creams, gels, patches, etc. for external use. Traditional pharmacists are not in a position to create such products, but this is the specialty of Compounding Pharmacists who can work with your doctors to create appropriate medication alternatives for you. Find these under the Pharmacies listing, on line, or ask your doctor.

Cymbalta (duloxetine) A fairly new, FDA approved antidepressant for reducing peripheral neuropathy pain and distress. As with other antidepressants, there are real negative side effects.

Exercise Classes – Low impact exercise classes, as offered at most senior centers and other community fitness centers, can be very helpful in strengthening weakened muscles, helping restore better balance, relieving pain and depression through the release of endorphins, all of which can be very helpful for Pners. It's very important that we keep moving to maximize our potentials for wellness and minimize our propensity for weakness. .

Feldenkrais – Feldenkrais is a form of physical therapy using movement and is often available in community fitness classes. Instructors can also be found in physical therapy listings of the yellow pages.

FlexGen – This is a topical cream found helpful by at least one person. New Vitality, 920 South Oyster Bay Road, Hicksville, NY 11801 (800) 943-6465

Gin and Raisins – This is a recipe that has been touted for a variety of ailments. Some people have found it helpful. It is offered here for general information in case you have heard about it, but didn't know what was meant. "Empty one box of golden light raisins into a large shallow container. Pour enough gin to completely cover the raisins. Let stand, uncovered, for about seven days until all of the liquid evaporates. Stirring occasionally will help

the evaporation process. When all liquid is evaporated, place the raisins in a closed container. Eat nine raisins a day. If you don't like raisins, put them on your cereal or in a salad. "

NeuroBehavioral Program - This innovative mind/body pain management program developed by psychotherapist, **John E. Leonard, Ph.D.**, helps people learn how to turn off their pain as one excellent mind/body tool for restorative health. The PBS program *Healing Quest* has featured Dr. Leonard and some of his clients in demonstrations of the technique, been based upon neuroscience and information theory that views the brain, mind, and behavior as networked information-sharing systems. NeuroBehavioral Program is one of the mind/body services used in the pain management program of the Institute for Restorative Health at 1460 Drew Avenue in south Davis. Dr. Leonard has trained many therapists in the NBP technique and to find a therapist in your area, call 530-758-4474 or go to www.bepainfree.net or www.4irh.com for more information.

HealthiBetic Foot Cream – This is a transdermal foot cream with l'arginine that helps restore healthy blood flow for better circulation, which is very important for nerve damaged feet. The product is available via (800) 679-4748 or go to www.healthibetic.com. It is particularly effective for diabetic neuropathy damage, but is also helpful with other neuropathies.

Hepatic Activation – The infusion of IV insulin provides the necessary signal for the liver to create needed enzymes, which reestablishes important biochemical pathways that are lacking in diabetics. It has shown remarkable effectiveness with advanced Diabetic Neuropathy patients but is quite expensive. **Aoki Diabetes Research Institute**, 1935 Stockton Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95816, (916) 455-2374, www.adri.org.

Ice Pack – 10 minutes A.M. and P.M. Blue ice type best as they don't melt. Wrap it in a towel or other cloth as ice should never be put directly on the skin. For maximum positive effective, it is best to alternate between hot/cold applications as it has been shown to be particularly good at reducing, even eliminating sharp, stabbing pain across the foot.

Icy Hot – For some people, this over-the-counter topical ointment cools down the hot feet and/or warms up cold feet. It also helps with muscle and joint pain.

Infrared Light Therapy – Available from a variety of providers, this therapy uses infrared light to increase circulation and reduce pain. This very popular therapy has helped many NCCNA members and others with PN. It is available through podiatrists, chiropractors, and other medical practitioners, as well as machines being available for home use.

AnodyneTherapy – has well established clinical trial studies showing that this form of infrared light therapy is particularly effective in reducing PN pain, restoring sensation, restoring balance, and accelerating wound healing. **Anodyne Therapy's** corporate office can be reached at (800) 288-1801 or via email at www.anodynetherapy.com. For locating service providers in your area at the internet site, enter the number of miles you're willing to travel to reach an Anodyne provider and you'll be sent, via the internet, the means to get a list of providers near you. Thousands of PNers and others with several other types of chronic conditions have been helped a great deal with anodyne therapy, literally transforming their lives from incapacitated immobility facing a life in a wheel chair and/or with amputated. **Ralph Snow** is our area **Anodyne Therapy** representative and has been a wonderful friend and advocate for many PNers in the region. He can be reached at anodynepro.aol.com or via cell phone (415) 637-6641.

Healthlight (800) 288-1801 www.infraredtherapy.com Some PNers have used this therapy and report it is effective. It is less expensive. It is found on line, no local representatives are known.

Institute for Restorative Health – This multi-disciplinary clinic creates functional medicine, integrative health paths for renewed hope, health and vitality – led by **Neurologist Erik Hassid, M.D.**, **Naturopath Marco Vespignani, ND**, **Psychologist John E. Leonard, PhD** with several complementary medicine practitioners providing a wide range of therapeutic services. The Institute works closely with its neighbor partner, **Physical Edge**, an onsite fitness and physical therapy center. 1460 Drew Ave., Davis, CA 95618 (530)758-4474 and (530)753-9011.

IVIG – Intravenous Immunoglobulin therapy has been used successfully to treat many neuropathic diseases some of which are not specified by FDA. This is a plasma based product found most useful for PN by patients with Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyneuropathy (CIDP) ACCREDO Therapeutics and Coram Healthcare are two companies providing this very expensive therapy. This is done under the care of your doctor and by prescription. We need to do all we can to insure that this treatment option is maintained with Medicare funding as there are strong political pressures to discontinue the service because of high costs. For more information on this issue, go to www.neuropathyaction.org and www.neuropathy.org

Ivory Soap – While some dismiss this product for PN as an urban myth or quackery nonsense, some people are actually finding that placing a bar of Ivory between the sheets at the foot of the bed actually reduces their night time PN feet distress. (Some have used other soaps.)

Jalapeños and Mineral Oil – rubbed into the skin at a place of pain, functioning as a home-made capsaicin.

L-Arginine – This amino acid improves blood vessel functioning, to increase circulation for better distribution of oxygen and nutrients. . It is available from health food stores, pharmacies, and on line at Vitacost, Swanson, or other internet resources.

Lidocaine Patches – These are commonly used for severe pain using very high powered pain medications and are available only by prescription. There are also a number of over-the-counter pain patches for lesser levels of pain and non-narcotic ingredients. .

Lortab – This very strong pain medication combines acetaminophen and hydrocodone and is available by prescription only, it is often used as an alternative for opiate dependency.

Lyrica (pregabalin) – Fairly new FDA approved anticonvulsant for diabetic peripheral neuropathy and shingles pain that is being increasingly prescribed for other neuropathies and fibromyalgia. .

Methadone – Methadone is a long lasting opiate that seems to help some with PN without too many side affects. If you are considering an opiate, it is best to work with a pain medicine specialist. As with other opiates, it must be monitored carefully to avoid developing addictions to the drug.

Motrin – An over the counter pain reliever, particularly for muscle strain, etc.

Nettle Leaves Foot Bath – (Dorothea Winslow shares this from her native Romania.) 2 quarts water – boil water and take from stove 1/3 cup nettle leaves (obtained at a health food store) Add immediately to the boiling hot water and let steep 2-3 hours so it is cool to use. Pour the water with the nettle leaves into a foot bath tub. Soak feet for 30 minutes. She then rubs a compound cream with Vitamins B5 and B6 obtained from Grandpa's Compounding Pharmacy in Placerville. Dorothea does this every morning "to heal her foot nerves."

Neuragen PN – This FDA registered OTC drug is designed to relieve neuropathic pain. Created with a non-toxic, skin penetrating (transdermal) formula of essential botanical oils, it has been extensively test in clinical trials. Its major ingredient is the essential oil of geranium developed by **OriginBioMedicine, Inc.** in Halifax, Canada. Some 70% of patients with post-herpetic neuralgia reported significant pain relief with the use of Neuragen PN. A group of diabetic neuropathy patients in the greater Sacramento area participated in a second study with similar results. Neuragen PN is available as a clear liquid or as a gel. The liquid is currently available at **Longs Drugs, Rite Aid, Elliot's Natural Foods**, and soon will be available at other pharmacies and other locations. You may also order this and other natural products directly via (888) 234-7256 or from www.originbiomed.com.

Neurontin (gabapentin) – This anti-convulsant is one of the most commonly prescribed medications for neuropathic pain and distress. Dosages may range from 300 to 3600 mg per day. Some Pners find it very helpful; others find its side effects too difficult for prolonged use. Using topical/transdermal pain relievers can typically reduce one's needs for the larger doses.

NeuroReflex – NeuroReflex is a similar technique to reflexology but with special attention paid to nerve health with massage of the feet.

Nikken – Nikken presents magnetic, infrared, and other therapeutic products including creams and vitamin supplements. Nikken CM Complex Skin Cream containing CM Complex high-potency cetyl myristoate, PEG 100 stearate, glycerin, glyceryl stearate, benzyl alcohol, lecithin, tocopheryl acetate, carboner, potassium hydroxide, menthol, fragrance and liposomes. The magnetic insoles have been very helpful for Pners who find walking difficult. 1-888-264-5536, ID# 230 153 100 Price \$31/4 oz tube + \$2.25 tax + \$8.50 shipping - \$41.75 (Compare with CMO Cream). **Neuropathy related Nikken products are available at the Institute for Restorative Health in Davis and from area representatives found via the web.**

NeuroHelp Essential – This vitamin/supplement product was developed from John Senneff's *Nutrients for Neuropathy* research with a formulation to improve over all nerve health in a natural way. It is marketed by **OriginBioMedicine, Inc.** 5162 Duke Street, Suite 520, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 1N7. For inquiries and orders, you call toll free to 1-888- 234-7256. Order information is also available at www.originbiomed.com. As owners of MedPress Publications, they also carry John Senneff's books: *Numb Toes and Aching Soles*, *Numb Toes and Other Woes*, and *Nutrients for Neuropathy* and the new book by Alexander McLellan, ND and Mark Sptiz, DPM, *The Numb Foot Book*, due out in August of 2008.

Peppermint Lotion – Cooling and soothing for neuropathic distress. The often used Dr. Scholl's Peppermint Foot & Leg Lotion version is available at most pharmacies.

Pain Relief Gel – This menthol based topical product is available at Rite Aid.

Peripheral nerve decompression surgery (AKA tarsal tunnel surgery) – This involves releasing compressed or pinched nerves in the foot that can lessen and/or or alleviate neuropathic pain caused by nerve entrapments in the foot, thus allowing the nerves to regenerate. It has been most effectively used with persons with diabetic neuropathy and some other forms of neuropathy. A thorough exam is can determine probably effectiveness. Some podiatrists, plastic, and orthopedic surgeons offer this treatment alternative. A practitioner of this method is **Tracy Ferragamo, DPM, in Davis at (530)753-9080.**

Physical Therapy – A variety of physical therapies can be helpful for some neuropathy conditions, particularly in relation to restoring balance and relieving neuro-muscular disorder pain and distress. Most HMOs will cover a limited number and type of therapies. See a listing of local physical therapists in your yellow pages

Rebuilder – This is a self-administered, drug free, in-home treatment for neuropathy and chronic pain. It is said to arrest the progression, reduce pain and numbness, improve sleep and walk further with greater confidence. It consists of a double footbath with electric stimulation. You can contact Rebuilder Medical, Inc. at 636 Treeline Drive, Charlestown, WV 25414 (866) 725-2202 fax: (304)725-4915 or via email at <http://www.rebuildermedical.com> for information and order arrangements.

Reflexology – Reflexology is a science that deals with the principle that there are reflex areas on the feet and hands that correspond with all the glands, organs and parts of the body. It is an art of stress reduction using the thumb and fingers on a client's feet in a specific way. Reflexologists can be found in local phone directories.

Reikii – This is an ancient energy approach to spiritual and physical healing, with or without "hands on" methods. The yellow pages will include listings of Reiki practitioners, usually among massage therapists.

Revitadyne – This is a form of infrared light therapy that is a non-invasive, safe, and easy to use modality, unitizing infrared and visible red light emitting diodes (LEDs) at a specific wavelength and frequency. Revitadyne available at adam@lymphacare.com (800) 288-1801

SalonPas – Over the counter patch for pain. Found at most pharmacies and grocery stores. COSTCO has them for around \$7 for 120 patches!

Shoes – Find a good shoe store that will consult with you and fit you well. If you are wearing an orthotic, be sure to take it with you to be sure it fits well in your shoe choice. Properly fitting shoes are essential for those with neuropathic distress in their feet and/or with leg and back pain problems. Most communities will have specialty shoe stores. Those in the metropolitan Sacramento area may want to take advantage of the 2008 partnership between **Shoes 'n' Feet** and **NCCNA** arranged with Davis podiatrist Tracy Basso, DPM, a long-time supporter of the Yolo Neuropathy Groups. NCCNA's 2008 members presenting their membership cards are given a 15% discount on specialty shoe purchases. The store is located at 4740 Natomas Blvd, Ste. 130, Sacramento, CA 95835, in the commercial complex northwest of Arco Arena, 916-419-0040.

Sore No More - This blend of plant extracts has a topical anesthetic effect depresses cutaneous sensory receptors, relieving muscle aches, soreness and neuropathic distress, with its cooling and soothing combination of herbs and extracts. A long lasting 8 oz. jar costs \$13.95, with \$6 in shipping and handling. Orders can be placed by calling 1-800-842-6622 in Moab, Utah.

Sports Cream – Available at Longs and other drug stores - deep rub for pain

Tea Tree Oil – This soothing lotion can help calm neuropathic distress.

Tai Chi – This simple movement exercise system is favored by many with peripheral neuropathy as it helps to develop and maintain proper balance. Clinical trial studies at the Louisiana State University have shown that it also helps in restoring sensation in previously numb feet. Tai Chi classes are available at public community/senior centers and in private fitness settings.

Tiger Balm – soothing balm

Tonic Water – This has enough quinine to help with leg cramps/muscle spasms. If you are prone to cramping, you might consider trying a ¼ or ½ cup of tonic water each evening.

Tylenol – This common, OTC is generally in reducing some pains.

Vicks Vapor Rub – Massaging one's feet with Vicks, particularly at night, soothes neuropathic pain and distress in one's feet and legs. It is also excellent for softening your toe nails and diminishing common toe nail problems.

Walking – Walking is an excellent general exercise for almost anyone without specific medical conditions that would preclude walking. However water walking is an excellent alternative even for those with back or leg problems who find walking too problematic. Properly fitting walking shoes are essential for avoiding injuries. Consulting with your doctor and a fitness coach can help you establish a walking program appropriate for your physical conditions, including warm-up and cool-down stretches. Use a pedometer to keep track of growing distances as you progress.

Warm/cool Baths and showers - These are excellent de-stressors and can help with reducing pain.

Water (Aquatic) Aerobic Exercise - Water supports your body so your muscles are developed without jarring. Exercise programs can be found in gyms with pools or in therapy pools supervised by physical therapists.

Weight loss – Achieving and maintaining healthy, ideal weights can help resolve numerous chronic health problems, including diabetic neuropathy. Blood sugar levels are lowered with weight loss, one will have more energy for exercise, and depressive states will be more easily overcome. The medical and support staff at the **Institute for Restorative Health and Physical Edge** in Davis have developed an excellent comprehensive, multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary, multi-week **"My True Body"** weight loss program that can help people achieve a broad range of healthy life style changes. For more information on the program, call 530/758-4474. You may find such a program in a physical therapy center, health club or gym near you.

Wintergreen Alcohol and Aspirin – Walgreen's brand was recommended but others do fine. Place 12 aspirins in the bottle and shake until the aspirin is dissolved. Use it to spray/splash or rub onto your feet or legs for cooling relief. As alcohol is a drying agent, it is important to follow up with a cooling cream.

Yoga – There are many types and styles of yoga from very mild movements, stretches and poses to very active, demanding exertion. Deep breathing and contemplative relaxation stillness are integral components of yoga practice. Most senior and community centers and fitness clubs have free or low-cost yoga classes. Gentle and chair yoga are most recommended.