

## Other treatments and exercise for pain

**Pilates:** is a form of exercise designed to develop a strong core (the body of muscle around your tummy). This helps you move better and protects your body from injuring itself. This can help pain in the back and help prevent you developing further pain. The proper explanation is that Pilates causes the muscles to elongate. It was developed by Joseph Pilates, which emphasizes the balanced development of the body through core strength, ie, your abdominal and pelvic muscles, developing flexibility, and awareness - in order to support your back and strengthen and restore the body to balance. Pilates builds on your body's core strength and improves your posture through a series of low repetition low impact stretching and conditioning exercises.



Pilates goes far beyond your core muscles however, and not only provides a complete body workout - you will also be working muscles you didn't even know you had! It also helps you develop an awareness of how your body works, helping your mind and body to work in harmony. Pilates can be beneficial for just about everyone, regardless of age and fitness level. They do not have a specific governing body yet but you might find one here:

<http://www.pilatesteacherassociation.org/>

**Yoga:** offers us a holistic approach to body, mind and spirit, which can provide us with the 'tools' to cope with the challenges of daily life. Yoga can also complement medical science and therapy for specific conditions. Everyone can practice yoga, regardless of age, sex or ability. Different types of Yoga will suit different people; you may need to try a few teachers to find one to suit you best.



Active self-help treatments are not to be overlooked because some of our body parts are differently formed. A good Yoga or Pilates teacher will design a program to suit your needs even if you are working from a wheel chair, using exercises that integrate the whole body to re-educate and restore it to optimum muscular and skeletal function. A private lesson might be a great way to start with one to one attention the teacher can focus in on your requirements and potential.

BWY teachers are trained to modify yoga positions for individuals with medical conditions ranging from pregnancy to arthritis.

<http://www.bwy.org.uk/>

**Acupuncture:** Based on traditional belief, acupuncturists are trained to use subtle diagnostic techniques that have been developed and refined for centuries. The focus is on the individual, not their illness, and all the symptoms are seen in relation to to each other. Each patient is unique; two people with the same western diagnosis may well receive different acupuncture treatments.



Traditional acupuncturists believe that the underlying principle of treatment is that illness and pain occur when the body's qi, or vital energy, cannot flow freely. There can be many reasons for this; emotional and physical stress, poor nutrition, infection or injury are among the most common. By inserting ultra-fine sterile needles into specific acupuncture points, a traditional acupuncturist seeks to re-establish the free flow of qi to restore balance and trigger the body's natural healing response.

**The British Acupuncture Council** <http://www.acupuncture.org.uk>

**The Alexander technique :** is a way of learning how you can get rid of harmful tension in your body, a way of learning to move mindfully through life. The Alexander process shines a light on inefficient habits of movement and patterns of accumulated tension, which interferes with our innate ability to move easily and according to how we are designed. It's a simple yet powerful approach that offers the opportunity to take

charge of one's own learning and healing process, because it's not a series of passive treatments but an active exploration that changes the way one thinks and responds in activity.

What to expect - Alexander lessons are not painful. There is nothing physically aggressive about the work. On the contrary, it is a process of allowing the pupil to release tension and the harmful habits that were responsible for it - at the pace that suits him or her, individually. This is a clothes-on therapy, as table work often forms part of the lesson, women pupils usually feel more comfortable wearing slacks, or jeans, rather than a skirt.



During the lesson your teacher will be observing your posture and movement patterns. She will also supplement the visual information in a very important way by using her hands, gently placing them on your neck, shoulders, back and so on. The teacher is using her hands in order to get more refined information about your patterns of breathing and moving.

To help her with this, she will probably ask you to perform some simple movements - perhaps walking, or standing up or sitting down in a chair - while her hands are kept in easy contact with your body.

At the same time that the teacher's hands are gathering information, they will also be conveying information to you. The teacher's hands will gently guide your body to encourage a release of restrictive muscular tension. Teachers vary somewhat in their approaches to teaching. This is not a cheap or quick fix; 24 sessions Alexander technique are needed or 6 sessions Alexander technique plus seeing a personal trainer. For further information:

<http://www.nhs.uk/news/2008/08August/Pages/BackpainandAlexandertechnique.aspx>

Find a therapist <http://www.alexandertechnique.com/teacher/>

**Osteopathy :** is a way of detecting, treating and preventing health problems by moving, stretching and massaging a person's muscles and joints.

Osteopathy is based on the principle that the wellbeing of an individual depends on their bones, muscles, ligaments and connective tissue functioning smoothly together.



Osteopaths use physical manipulation, stretching and massage, with the aim of:

- increasing the mobility of joints
- relieving muscle tension
- enhancing the blood supply to tissues
- helping the body to heal

They use a range of techniques, but don't use drugs or surgery.

**Chiropractic:** According to the General Chiropractic Council (GCC), chiropractic is "a health profession concerned with the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mechanical disorders of the musculoskeletal system, and the effects of these disorders on the function of the nervous system and general health". Chiropractors (practitioners of chiropractic) use their hands to treat disorders of the bones, muscles and joints. Treatments that involve using the hands in this way are called "manual therapies".



Chiropractors use a range of techniques, with an emphasis on manipulation of the spine.

They may also offer advice on diet, exercise and lifestyle, and rehabilitation programmes that involve exercises to do in your own time. Some chiropractors may also offer other alternative treatments, such as acupuncture.

Chiropractic is part of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) meaning that it is different from treatments that are part of conventional western medicine.

Some uses of chiropractic treatments are based on ideas and an "evidence base" not recognised by the majority of independent scientists.

Many chiropractors only treat conditions related to the spine, such as lower back or neck pain.

Some chiropractors, however, claim to treat a wider range of conditions, including asthma, infant colic, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and many others.

*A database of therapists and professionals such as Physios, massage therapists, pilates teachers, etc, who have had direct experience of working with thalidomiders has been created and is being continually added to as we become aware of them.*

*These are individuals who have been recommended by those who have knowledge and experience of using them. However, different treatments and practitioners work for different individuals. The key is to find somewhere locally that you can use to reduce your pain – or more importantly, to stop pain becoming an issue in the first place.*

The information and advice presented in these pages was developed by beneficiaries and advisers as a result of their participation in the Fit for the Future event held in April 2016. It is based on the advice and experience of those living with Thalidomide damage and those who work alongside them.

It is always advisable to talk to your own GP before embarking on an exercise or diet regime. The Health & Wellbeing team at the Trust are also available to support you with all aspects of living well and can provide further information and advice based on your specific needs. Please don't hesitate to contact them on 01480 474074.