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# Miracle Cure or Health Hoax?

What stem cell therapy can — and cannot — do for you

By Gary Greenberg

Stem cell therapy has been heralded as a panacea for most any ailment, ranging from problematic knees to hair loss to heart disease and dementia. But the hype is more advanced than the science, and the medical establishment warns that stem cell therapy — also called regenerative medicine — is still unproven for most conditions.

“At this time, there are very few conditions for which stem cell-based therapies are proven and widely accepted by the global medical community,” note experts at the International Society for Stem Cell Research. “These are primarily limited to blood stem cell transplantation to treat diseases of the blood, such as leukemia and sickle cell anemia. Treatments for most other conditions have not been shown to be safe and effective.”

But that hasn't stopped the proliferation of stem cell clinics, as well as a bombardment of newspaper, Internet, billboard, and direct mail ads, some of which even offer a free dinner to attend a stem cell seminar “guaranteed to change your life.”

Stem cell therapy is also likely to change your bank account because insurance typically doesn't cover it. Still, people have been forking over thousands of dollars to give it a try.

## Understanding Stem Cells

Stem cells are master cells that can develop into different kinds of tissue. Unlike other cells, they can also replicate indefinitely. There are several different types of stem cells with varying degrees of pliability. The most versatile are embryonic stem cells, but they aren't used in stem cell therapy due to ethical and safety concerns.

Adult stem cells are more varied, including cells from umbilical cord blood, bone marrow, fat, and even individual organs. Although not as versatile as embryonic stem cells, they still help maintain and repair tissue as it ages or gets damaged. They not only create new cells, but also provide healing compounds that reduce inflammation and modulate immune response.

“Stem cells are like firemen who not only rush to put out the fire, but also rebuild the house,” explains stem cell pioneer Dr. Dipnarine Maharaj.

When we are young, we have

# 6 Painful Conditions & New Ways to Treat Them

By Lynn Allison

Millions of Americans suffer from chronic pain — more than diabetes, heart disease, and cancer combined, according to the most recent statistics. The National Institutes of Health says that 25.3 million American adults suffer from daily pain, while 23.4 million report that they are in a lot of pain.

Dr. Gregory Smith, M.D., a pain expert and the producer of the film “American Addict,” tells *Health Radar* that “while the legitimate use of opioids to treat pain in some patients is justified, the opioid crisis shows that conventional physicians are at a loss on how to treat these patients and are not trained in effective alternatives for chronic pain.”

Here are six of the most agonizing conditions and some new ways to treat them:

**1. Shingles.** One in three people will get shingles at some point in their life, especially if they have had chickenpox. And then even a slight breeze touching the painful, blistered skin can be excruciating. Dr. Emanuel Nazario-Irizarry, a board-certified internist at Kelsey-Seybold Clinic in Texas tells *Health Radar* that while there is no cure for shingles, the new “non-live” vaccine called Shingrix helps reduce the risk for developing shingles and lowers the risk of complications. If you do get shingles, head to your doctor within three days to get antiviral medication which may shorten the duration and severity of the rash.

**2. Fibromyalgia.** This well-recognized disorder is characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain. Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., author of “The Fatigue and Fibromyalgia Solution,” tells *Health Radar* that his S.H.I.N.E. Protocol helped 91 percent of his patients suffering from the condition. Briefly, this involves addressing adequate sleep, hormonal support, inflammation and infection, nutritional support, and exercise. More information can be found on his website, [endfatigue.com](http://endfatigue.com).

**3. Kidney stones.** Dr. Joshua Stern, M.D., chief of endourology at the Kidney Stone Clinic at Montefiore Health System, tells *Health Radar* that kidney stones lodged in the urinary tract can cause “sudden and intense pain starting in the back, belly, or side” of the body. These hard masses are most commonly made of calcium and oxalate — a chemical found naturally in foods. Older adults are more susceptible because they are prone to dehydration. Drinking more fluids and eating foods with less sodium and calcium can reduce your chance of developing kidney stones.

**4. Migraines.** These debilitating headaches affect more than 3 million Americans. During a migraine attack, activated neurons lead to throbbing pain. Dr. Alexander Mauskop, a neurologist and director of the New York Headache Center, says “you can use essential oils and other forms of therapy to reduce the pain

without resorting to medications with potentially serious side effects.” His recommendations are to try lavender and peppermint oils in tandem. Place a drop or two on a cotton ball and inhale. Teitelbaum says that taking vitamin B12 and magnesium may also ease pain.

**5. Frozen shoulder.** This common condition that strikes mostly women ages 46 to 60 is often mistaken for arthritis. If left untreated it can lead to a painful, progressive tightening of the joint. Dr. Fabrizio Mancini, D.O., tells *Health Radar* that a new technique called pulsed electromagnetic field therapy (PEMF) is highly effective for treating frozen shoulder. “By putting electromagnetic pulse in the body, the cells can repair faster, reducing inflammation and pain,” says the best-selling author of “The Power of Self-Healing.” Stretching the shoulder joint by walking your hands up a wall is also helpful.

**6. Urinary tract infections.** As women age, the lining of the vagina becomes thinner and less acidic, making them vulnerable to painful urinary tract infections, especially after menopause. Dr. Mary Jane Minkin, M.D., a gynecologist and clinical professor at the Yale School of Medicine suggests trying Imvexxy, an applicator-free insert that dissolves and releases estradiol, an estrogen, into the vagina. The 4-microgram dose contains less estrogen than other products on the market, and very little of the hormone gets into the bloodstream. □