

ALTERNATIVES

Natural remedies worth trying

From high cholesterol to hot flashes, these supplements may help.

BY CHRIS WOOLSTON

There's a prescription pill (or three) for just about everything these days—and many of them work like magic. But the latest science suggests that a handful of natural remedies may also help diminish your symptoms. The chart below includes six options. If you want to try one, be sure to tell your doctor what you're taking (supplements *and* OTC remedies), and never quit taking any prescription medicine unless you get the official OK.

If you have ...	You probably take ...	You could try ...	What the research says
Period pain	Over-the-counter pain relievers	French maritime pine bark extract	A 2008 study found that daily doses of the extract—a source of circulation-boosting antioxidants—shortened suffering by about one day each cycle and reduced the need for pain-killers. Look for the brand name Pycnogenol.
High cholesterol	Statins	Phytosterols	When used every day, these natural plant compounds reduce your body's absorption of bad cholesterol from food. One Centrum Cardio multivitamin delivers 400 mg of phytosterols, roughly what you'd get from a cup of wheat germ or a tablespoon of Benecol spread.
Chronic joint pain	Prescription or OTC pain relievers	Glucosamine	A building block of healthy cartilage, glucosamine could slow osteoarthritis, the usual cause of chronic knee pain, experts say. Try 1,500 mg a day for a few months.
Migraines	Triptans or OTC pain relievers	Co-enzyme Q ₁₀ (CoQ ₁₀)	This nutrient is a key cog in the energy factories of cells, something thought to go awry in migraine patients. A study in <i>Neurology</i> found that 100 mg of CoQ ₁₀ three times a day for four months cut down on headaches and nausea.
Irritable bowel syndrome	Pain relievers, laxatives, and antidiarrheal meds	Probiotics	Several studies show that daily consumption of yogurt rich in gut-friendly bacteria (such as Activia) or probiotic supplements containing germs such as <i>Lactobacillus</i> and <i>Bifidobacterium</i> can help relieve irritable bowel symptoms without side effects.
Hot flashes	Hormone replacement therapy	Soy supplements	Studies suggest that 40 to 80 mg of plant estrogens (isoflavones) in soy supplements may bring some relief. Women with breast cancer or a history of breast cancer should talk to their doctors first.

