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## Reflexology may be as effective as painkillers for conditions such as back ache and arthritis

about 45% longer when they had the treatment Researchers say is the first time reflexology has been

People felt 40% less pain and were able to stand pain for

scientifically tested as a treatment for acute pain

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By ANNA HODGEKISS











conditions such as osteoarthritis, new research suggests. Those who had the treatment felt about 40 per cent less pain,

and were able to stand pain for about 45 per cent longer when they used the complementary therapy as a method of pain relief. The researchers, from the University of Portsmouth, said it was

the first time this therapy had been scientifically tested as a treatment for acute pain.



therapy were able to stand pain for 45 per cent longer, researchers found

Dr Carol Samuel, a trained reflexologist who carried out the

experimental procedures as part of her PhD studies, said the results suggested reflexology could be used to in conjunction with drugs to treat conditions such as osteoarthritis and back pain. Participants attended two sessions, in which they were asked

to submerge their hand in ice water. In one of the sessions they were given reflexology before they

submerged their hand, and in the other session they believed they were receiving pain relief from a Tens machine, which was not actually switched on. The researchers found that when the participants received

reflexology prior to the session, they were able to keep their hand in the ice water for longer before they felt pain, and that they could also tolerate the pain for a longer period of time. Dr Samuel said: 'As we predicted, reflexology decreased pain

'It is likely that reflexology works in a similar manner to acupuncture by causing the brain to release chemicals that lessen pain signals.'

Dr Ivor Ebenezer, co-author of the study, said: 'We are pleased with these results. Although this is a small study, we hope it will be the basis for future research into the use of reflexology."

pressure to any body area but is commonly used on either the feet, as it was in this study. The researchers used a small study of 15 people to

Reflexology involves applying

sensations.

determine whether reflexology would be more effective than no pain relief at all. Dr Ebenezer said: 'Complementary and

alternative therapies come in for a lot of criticism, and many have never been properly tested scientifically. 'One of the common

community is that these therapies are often not tested under properly controlled conditions.

criticisms by the scientific

'When a new drug is tested, its effects are compared with a sugar pill.

'If the drug produces a similar response to the sugar pill, then it is likely that the drug's effect on the medical condition is due to a placebo effect.

Corbis Corbis

The findings suggest reflexology

back ache and osteoarthritis

could help with conditions such as

'In order to avoid such criticism in this study, we compared the effects of reflexology to a sham Tens control that the

participants believed produced pain relief.

'This is the equivalent of a sugar pill in drug trials.'

Dr Samuel added: 'This is an early study, and more work will need to be done to find out about the way reflexology works. 'However, it looks like it may be used to complement conventional drug therapy in the treatment of conditions that

are associated with pain, such as osteoarthritis, backache and cancers.' The study has been published in the Journal of

Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice.











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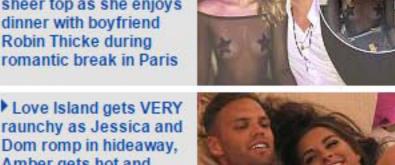
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