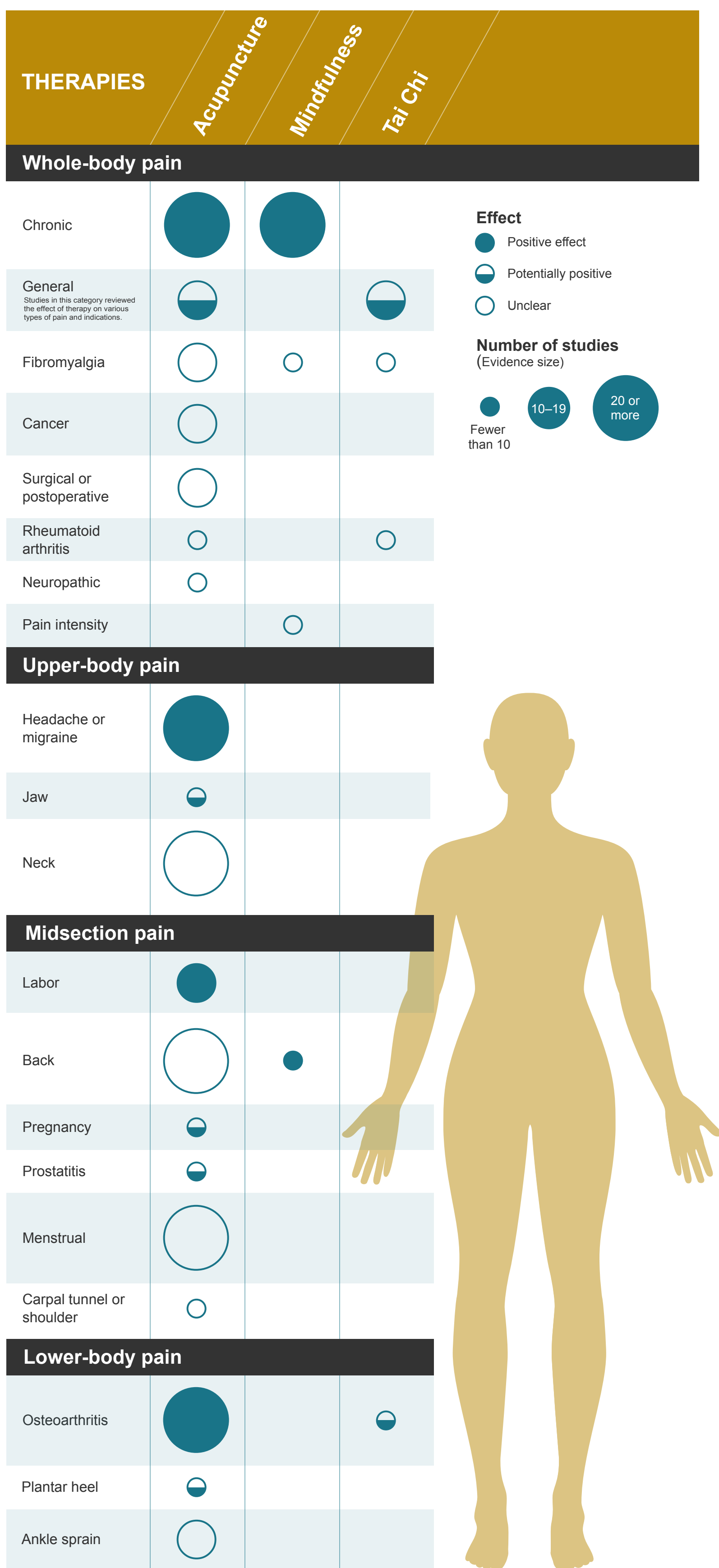


About 126 million adults report having pain in the past three months. Annually, nearly 62 million Americans fill at least one prescription for opioids, and approximately 12 million individuals misuse prescription pain relievers. Alternative and integrative therapies, such as acupuncture, mindfulness (meditation), and Tai Chi, may help some individuals manage pain.

Understanding the effectiveness of these therapies can be a challenge. RAND researchers studied hundreds of reviews of the evidence on the effect of these three therapies on different types of pain.

The chart below compiles information from these studies on the effectiveness of acupuncture, mindfulness, and Tai Chi for the types of pain listed below. Each symbol represents both the likelihood of being effective (for example, color-filled circles represent therapies likely to have a positive effect) and the number of studies on the effect of a particular therapy. Areas of the chart without circles indicate insufficient evaluation of certain combinations of pain type and therapy.

Individuals can use this chart to understand which therapies may be promising to help manage their pain. This chart is not meant to provide medical advice; patients should consult their health care providers before pursuing therapeutic treatment.



About the Research

This graphic is based on evidence maps for mindfulness (July 2017), Tai Chi (February 2014, updated March 2018), and acupuncture (March 2013, updated March 2018). The evidence maps represent an overview of the evidence found in systematic reviews that identify, extract, synthesize, and appraise information from published research. The methodology is described in detail in the published reports cited below.

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Research conducted by

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