

# What's In Those Sugar Pills?

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## The Placebo Effect

A word whose etymology can be traced back to the latin phrase: "I shall please ", the placebo effect has proliferated the scientific community for decades as a means to prove something is effective. The deduction is simple: If a given drug, therapy, or other intervention is more effective than a fake version of it, it is effective. While that reasoning is sound, it begs the question: "why are those sugar pills effective at all, and why aren't we researching that?". **What is in those sugar pills?** This is obviously a silly question, however, the effects are very real. If you've ever heard of sham surgeries (Wartolowska et al, 2014), you'd know that the potential

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benefits of an open, positive mindset are no joke. The mindset part is of paramount importance - there is also a **nocebo** effect. It is for this reason that despite a background education in psychology and behavioral analysis, I still approach alternative therapies with an open mind. This is because I know the strength that the placebo effect can have, *if you suspend your scientific scrutiny.*

## Belief-Based Medicine

Sometimes belief in a procedure is more important than what the procedure actually is. This is not to say that in order to harness the power of the placebo effectively, you need to renounce your scientific "faith", but rather, that if you choose to try belief based medicine, you should approach it with an open mind and a willingness to be healed - the results might surprise you. I am definitely not encouraging anyone to avoid life saving surgery or try to meditate your hair back, and I am definitely not bashing the scientific community, merely stating that you can *do both*. Science is proven to be replicable - alternative medicine by definition is not, but that doesn't mean it's *never* effective, it just cannot be reliably reproduced, which I argue in some cases is due to the fact that the healing that's happening has nothing to do with the therapy itself but the patient's belief (sometimes even the confidence of the administrator of the therapy can affect the placebo effect, but i digress).

## What does this mean for fitness?

In the sea of alternative therapies and fitness fads and myths, stick to the tried, tested and true methods for exercise and nutrition, and still approach alternative therapies with a critical eye. If chosen carefully, and believed in wholeheartedly, alternative therapies may help, and the worst they could do, is not work (For the most part. There are some alternative therapies out there that can actually cause harm, which is why I suggest using a critical eye with all of them).

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# The Bottom Line

When science stops working, go to the holistic healer with an open mind.  
Stay Strong.



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