

GEAR & GADGETS

Next-Gen Heat Pads

Basic plug-in models are fine, but these new sleeves, belts and massagers provide heat therapy in a more refined package

By Ashley Mateo

MASSIMO Alpian, 40, first turned to heat therapy in 2018 to deal with the tightness and spasms caused by a lingering hip injury. Plug-in heating pads and single-use adhesive heat patches helped the Boulder, Colo.-based communications director cope while waiting to schedule surgery.

But those old-school methods left him frustrated and tangled up in electric cords. This fall, he purchased the Hyperice Venom Go, a reusable adhesive patch that warms up when connected to a rechargeable magnetic pod. "It is more portable and more versatile than anything else I've tried," he said. Postsurgery, Mr. Alpian used the patch on his shoulders to relieve pressure from crutches and lower back pain from sitting.

Chances are you've soothed a headache with a warm compress or soaked sore muscles in a bath. These techniques can certainly help, but an emerging class of new tools from brands like Therabody and Hyperice deliver more consistent heat therapy.

Experts say localized heat therapy works with specific muscle pains—like when your back is stiff after a day at your desk or your legs feel tight after a round of squats. "When you warm a tissue, it relaxes and releases tension," said Chris Kolba, a physical therapist at the

IT'S GETTING HOT IN HERE / FOUR NEW WARMERS



READY, AIM, FIRE

Percussion guns like the **Gravity Relax Heated Massager** rapidly strike your muscles and increase blood flow. The roving heat delivered by the heated metal head attachment (which warms up to 125°F) won't pack the power of a localized patch or sleeve, but it will make the experience more soothing than battering. \$150, Gravity-Blankets.com

STICKING POINT

An upgraded version of the adhesive, air-activated heating patches you can pick up at any drugstore, the **Hyperice Venom Go** combines a sticky pad with a detached, rechargeable magnetic pod for on-the-go spot treatments. The pod reaches temperatures of 113°F in just 90 seconds once applied to the skin, and a standard session is 10 minutes. It

can provide three levels of heat and three patterns of vibration, which can be set via buttons on the pod or in the Hyperice app. \$149, Hyperice.com



WRAP IT UP

A heat-therapy hat trick, the **Heat Healer Body Belt** employs three types of technology to provide relief: Infrared

heat, which is distributed via 44 pockets filled with different beads and penetrates deep into your muscles to reduce soreness; pulsed electromagnetic field therapy, which may reduce inflammation on a cellular level; and red-light therapy, which can increase blood flow and stimulate cell regeneration. It does, unfortunately, plug into the wall. \$228, HeatHealer.com



TAKE A KNEE

Therabody's RecoveryTherm Hot and Cold Vibration Knee Sleeve is a cyborg-esque leg slip with three built-in treatment programs—cooling, heating and contrast

therapy—which can allay knee pain. These run for 15 to 20 minutes, and you can add vibration therapy in the form of gentle massage at any time with the touch of a button. \$399, Therabody.com



SERGE BLOCH (ILLUSTRATION); F. MARTIN RAMIN/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (GEAR)

Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.

The efficacy of these newer devices is still being established, but signs from studies of the technique are promising. A 2021 review published in the peer-reviewed journal *Life* said that people who treated acute lower back pain with heat wraps experienced significantly reduced pain intensity, both during treatment and up to two weeks afterward.

Other research indicates that the effects go beyond temporary pain relief. Lo-

calized heat therapy was shown to increase blood flow in a study published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology*—and bringing fresh blood full of oxygen and nutrients to damaged tissue helps flush out cellular waste products (like carbon dioxide) for faster recovery. That is because heat travels a few millimeters under the skin and widens the nearby blood vessels, bringing more blood to the area, said Farah Hameed, assistant professor at Columbia University Irving Medical Center.

Plus, the feel-good bene-

fits of heat are harmless—as long as you're not using temperatures that put you at risk for a burn. In the same way heat relaxes your muscles, it can also relax the nervous system, Mr. Kolba said, taking your body out of a stress reaction and into a rest or recovery response. If you've only used conventional heat therapy tools, this might be a surprise—if anything, accidentally getting wrapped in a heating pad cord can cause extra stress. The best part of many of the unique new implementations? No wires required.

THE FIXER / DANIEL VARGHESE



How to Maximize Your Display Space



KIERSTEIN EISENPREIS (ILLUSTRATION)

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
TRUST YOUR DECISIONS

QI've been using my laptop and an external monitor, but I want more workspace. Should I get a bigger display or a second?

A Why not both? If you like having two screens, just wait until you try life with three. So much room for activities!

Before getting started, make sure your laptop software can support extra displays. Most new laptops have no trouble working in conjunction with one external monitor. And most PCs can support a second one, said Ebrahim Zmehr, founder of EZ Quest. Many Apple computers, however, don't have this power.

Mr. Zmehr's company specializes in a solution for frustrated Apple fans: USB-C hubs. These allow you to bypass your computer's software limitations and add more displays. One of

the company's multiport hub adapters, like the catchily named X40214 (\$170, EZQ.com) would let me connect up to three external displays to my 2020 Apple MacBook Air (or any Mac with M1 or M2 chips). Connecting extra displays might make your computer run a bit slowly, but isn't risky otherwise.

What monitor to get? I would opt for one like the Philips Brilliance 279P1, which can support 4K resolution and has a 27-inch



Philips Brilliance 279P1, \$400, BestBuy.com

screen. You could save money by buying a monitor with lower resolution, but I think the 279P1 is in the sweet spot for most people. Sized appropriately for the average desk, it is also future-proof, since most laptops are unlikely to support higher-resolution monitors for some time.

With your new monitor, you can adopt my favored setup. My primary monitor is flanked by my laptop on the left—propped up with a stand I received from a previous employer—and another monitor on the right. That tertiary monitor is currently rotated vertically. I first saw this move on the desk of my aunt, who works in cybersecurity, but I don't think you need to know Python to pull it off.

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