

CALENDAR

FOR ALUMNI & FRIENDS

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PITT HEALTH ACADEMY ATLANTA SEPTEMBER 13

The Ritz-Carlton, Atlanta, Ga.
hsalumni.pitt.edu/event/Atlanta2018

MEDICAL ALUMNI WEEKEND 2018 OCTOBER 5–6

Reunion Classes:

- 1958
- 1963, 1968,
- 1973, 1978,
- 1983, 1988,
- 1993, 1998,
- 2003, 2008,
- 2013

maa.pitt.edu/reunion

HOMECOMING WEEKEND OCTOBER 5–6

alumni.pitt.edu/news-events/homecoming-2018/

SCIENCE 2018 OCTOBER 17–19

Alumni Hall and Wyndham Pittsburgh
 University Center
science2018.pitt.edu

2019 WINTER ACADEMY FEBRUARY 15

The Ritz-Carlton, Naples, Fla.
hsalumni.pitt.edu/event/WA2018

To find out what else is happening
 at the medical school, visit
health.pitt.edu and maa.pitt.edu.



ANDREY POPOV/GETTY IMAGES

Soothe saying



FOR REAL! TWEEN SCIENCE

Remember the time when you were biking and you absolutely wiped out? You ended up with an asphalt-bitten scraped knee simmering in the sun. Maybe you rubbed it or held it in pain. That's not a far cry from your mom kissing a boo-boo. And it turns out there's a scientific explanation behind our instinct to alleviate pain with a gentle touch.

After that initial *ouch!*, you know that duller, annoying throbbing that sticks around? Sometimes your nervous system can lower that after-pain. If you get enough sensory signaling from elsewhere—like caresses or a cold pack (think touch or temperature)—that can override the pain transmission before it even reaches the brain.

Researchers aren't sure why. Some think it might be because the nonpain signals are traveling on faster neurons than the painful ones!

Your mind can help, too. Any soothing—a gentle touch, a kind word—can put your limbic forebrain (which deals with emotions) in gear, sending signals to the midbrain (which is right near the start of your spine). Neurons in the midbrain can lower pain signals so you don't feel so overwhelmed by them.

So, there are at least two systems in your body that take the sting out. Talk about painkillers! —Ellen Kruczek

Thanks to Ajay Wasan, MD vice chair for pain medicine at Pitt and UPMC, for helping us out with his soothing words.

Is there a topic you'd like us to explore? Drop us a line at medmag@pitt.edu.