



Arthritis - How To Beat Pain Naturally

Arthritis is characterised by severe pain and inflammation in joints - knee, hip, elbow, fingers, toes and shoulders.

Symptoms

Symptoms of arthritis are pain, swelling, stiffness and deformity of the joints. This can appear suddenly or be a gradual worsening. Sometimes the pain may be very sharp and burning or it may be dull and aching.

There are two forms of arthritis:-

Osteoarthritis

- Affects the weight bearing joints like knees, hips and ankles, and tends to be more common in older people. It is due to the destruction of cartilage which cushions the joints and many people think of it as a normal part of the ageing process. The smooth surface of the cartilage becomes rough and this results in friction, the joint becomes deformed, painful and stiff and the muscles holding the joint together become weak.

Rheumatoid Arthritis (R.A.)

- This is a type of arthritis which effects the lubricating mechanism and cushioning of joints. Bone surfaces are destroyed and the bones fuse together creating stiffness, swelling, fatigue and crippling pain.

Rely on Pain Killers

If you suffer from either type of arthritis you have probably given up hope and rely on your pain killers to treat the symptoms.

Nutrition May Give Relief

However, nutritional intervention may well give relief to many sufferers of these debilitating conditions.

Eliminate Foods

Many people, particularly R.A. sufferers find relief when they eliminate certain foods from their diet. The main culprits are tobacco and foods from the nightshade family including tomatoes, peppers, potatoes and aubergines. These foods contain substances which have been shown to affect joints in some individuals.

Fats

From the standpoint of arthritis the role of dietary fats cannot be avoided as some of these are converted in the body to inflammatory prostaglandins - substances which increase pain and inflammation.

Free Radicals

Processed fats which have been 'hydrogenated' cause the formation of free radicals which can be damaging to joints. Therefore any foods containing hydrogenated fats should be avoided. However, many convenience foods contain hydrogenated fats, so make sure you read the labels and always try to eat fresh, organic produce.



Which Supplements?

Some fats in the diet are anti-inflammatory and may help to alleviate the pain in some arthritis sufferers. These are the **essential fatty acids** which are the **Omega-6 and Omega-3 fats**. They are found in unsaturated vegetable oils and oily fish such as herring, salmon and sardines. However, many people would benefit from taking supplements of borage, blackcurrant seed oil or a stable fish oil.

Promising Results

Various studies have been carried out looking into the effectiveness of essential fatty acids in helping improve arthritic joints. The results of which have been very promising. Other useful nutrients for helping with arthritic joints are antioxidant nutrients, vitamins A,C,E, selenium and zinc. These help to fight free radicals.

Antioxidants 'Mop up'

Free radicals are very unstable molecules that react with other unstable molecules in the body and cause problems such as joint and cardiovascular damage. The antioxidant nutrients help to 'mop up' free radicals. Vitamin C is also a very important constituent of collagen which helps to build and maintain cartilage.

Glucosamine sulphate

is another supplement which many people with osteoarthritis find helpful. It is involved in joint maintenance and synovial fluid production. Glucosamine sulphate has been compared to nonsteroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs in various studies. The glucosamine sulphate was shown to be as effective as the drugs in treating the pain and improving mobility of the joints. As well as improving joint mobility and relieving pain, glucosamine sulphate does not cause the side effects that many anti-arthritic drugs cause. Chondroitin is also used for cartilage regeneration but glucosamine has had more research done on it. Both have studies that show they are effective for osteoarthritis but no single trial has compared the effects of the two.

Minerals and Herbs

Bone minerals and herbs are also essential to prevent bone loss and to maintain bone density. Calcium, magnesium and boron are three important bone minerals which may be taken as nutritional supplements to enhance the dietary intake. Herbal preparations such as shave grass containing silica which is important for bone development and yucca, which has anti-inflammatory effects, may help.

Organic Sulphur

MSM (methyl sulphonyl methane) is another preparation that is gaining a very good reputation in helping relieve joint pain and stiffness. It is a form of sulphur that is very well absorbed. Sulphur plays an essential role in the health of bones and joints, where it functions in the formation of cartilage, tendons and ligaments.