

Keepin' the Joints Jumpin' – Living with Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis. It is caused by smoldering inflammation, loss of circulation to cartilage, and slowed repair of cartilage injury. Like with most illnesses, addressing the underlying causes works better than just treating the symptoms.

Remove causes where possible – some things, like age and heredity, cannot be changed, but others can be:

Overweight – losing 1% of body weight can improve arthritis scores by 10%

Being sedentary – increasing exercise decreases joint pain in many studies. It is often less painful to start with water exercise and then move up to exercise on land.

Nutritional deficiencies – vitamins C, D, K, calcium, magnesium, manganese, protein, fish oil, sulfates.

Diet:

It helps some people to avoid certain things in their diet, for instance to limit meat or nightshade vegetables or other things like dairy or wheat to which they may be sensitive. Talk to us about an elimination diet if you want to see if this may apply to you and for help figuring out which foods affect you badly.

Adding anti-inflammatory foods to the diet can also be helpful for many people, such as more fruits and foods rich in vitamin C, and anti-inflammatory spices like ginger and turmeric (think curries!) One diet that has been studied in painful conditions is the “live foods diet:”

Foods to eat: fresh fruits, salads, raw vegetables, carrot juice, nuts, seeds, whole grain products, tubers, flax oil, extra virgin olive oil

Foods to avoid: alcohol, caffeine, foods containing refined sugar, corn syrup, refined and/or hydrogenated oil, refined flour, dairy, eggs, and all meat

Goals in Treatment

1. Limit progression of the disease (“Disease-modifying therapies”)

Some dietary supplements and drugs may slow the progression of arthritis:

Glucosamine Sulfate (not hydrochloride), 1500 mg per day

Chondroitin Sulfate Dose: 400mg. 2 – 3 x daily

In 2007, ConsumerLab.com reported that 73% of all products tested that contained chondroitin failed potency testing. In 2009, 26% failed. Some glucosamine supplements contained excessive lead.

Doxycycline 100 mg bid

2. Relieve symptoms: The following recommendations have all been studied scientifically and been shown to be effective.

Exercise – land or water, walking, strengthening, yoga, tai chi

Weight loss

Footwear – good arch supports and shock absorption

Pain relief:

Medications:

Limit anti-inflammatory medications (like ibuprofen, naproxen/aleve) – these relieve symptoms but may actually increase the joint damage as well as risking serious side effects

Preferred pain relief: Acetaminophen, Devil's Claw 60 – 100 mg per day

Tramadol (by prescription) – 50 mg, up to 8 per day

Natural products: many different supplements have been shown to be beneficial in osteoarthritis in research

1. Pycnogenol (or Grape Seed Extract) - 150 mg per day
2. Avocado-Soybean Unsaponifiables – 300 mg per day
3. Hydrolyzed Collagen – 10 grams per day
4. MSM – 3 – 8 grams per day
5. Capsaicin – applied to the skin around the joint 4 x daily
6. Boswellia – dosing depends on product, 100 – 3600 mg per day
7. SAME – 400 – 800 mg per day
8. Niacinamide – 500 mg 6x daily
9. Cat’s Claw (*uncaria tomentosa*)
10. Rose Hips
11. Ginger
12. Phytodolor *Populus tremula, Fraxinus excelsior and Solidago virgaurea*
13. SKI306X *Clematis mandshurica, Trichosanthes kirilowii, Prunella vulgaris*)
14. Willow Bark
15. Duhuo Jisheng Wan
16. Stinging Nettle
17. Gitadyl (*feverfew, American aspen and milfoil*)
18. Turmeric

With so many possibilities, how do you choose? Consider other conditions you may have:

- *Pycnogenol with cardiovascular disease*
- *Boswellia if there is inflammatory bowel disease*
- *Collagen if there is neck or back pain*
- *SAME if there is depression (or B6, B12, folate)*
- *Nettles for allergies, prostate trouble*
- *Turmeric if you like spice – we recommend a “tea”: heat 1 cup almond milk. Whisk in 1/2 tsp turmeric, 1 tsp cinnamon, ¼ tsp ginger and a generous pinch of black pepper, as well as honey or stevia as needed. DO NOT LEAVE OUT THE PEPPER – it leads to 20x better absorption of the turmeric!*

You can also use turmeric topically on joints near the surface, like knees, thumbs, and even shoulders: make a paste by mashing powdered turmeric into vaseline or some other salve. Apply it overnight to the skin over a sore joint or tendon with saran wrap on top. Warning: it can stain the skin yellow for a while.

Mindbody Treatments: Relaxation practices and cognitive therapy can help with pain control and depression

Injections – steroids and hyaluronic acid can be helpful when injected directly into the joint

Surgery –

Arthroscopy is no more effective than sham (pretend) surgery – don’t bother

Joint replacement and osteotomy can be beneficial, however

Resources

Managing Pain Before it Manages You, M. Caudill

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/content/1/c6/04/79/67/escapeprogramme.pdf> - Escape programme, for self-management – handouts are there

<http://www.fullcircledmed.org/pain-management/>

The Arthritis Foundation Northern California Chapter 800-464-6240 <http://www.arthritis.org/>

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), Information Clearinghouse

877-22-NIAMS, <http://www.niams.nih.gov>