

Alleviate Arthritis Pain Naturally

By Lynn Allison

As millions of Americans are already aware, the pain of arthritis can be devastating. And medications to ease the pain can have serious side effects. Thankfully, there are many natural therapies and treatments to alleviate the symptoms of this potentially crippling condition.

Ellen Kamhi, Ph.D., co-author of “Arthritis: An Alternative Medicine Definitive Guide,” explains that the condition is not one disease, but an aggregate of illnesses the features of which include joint pain, stiffness, and inflammation. The most common form of arthritis is osteoarthritis, usually attributed to joint “wear and tear.” Rheumatoid arthritis, although less prevalent, attacks people of every age group and is more common in women.

“Rheumatoid arthritis is an inflammatory disease in which the body’s immune system attacks its own healthy tissues,” says Kamhi, who adds that research has shown that even people diagnosed with osteoarthritis have some degree of autoimmune involvement.

Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., a board-certified internist, expert on autoimmune disorders, and author of the Cures A-Z phone app, tells *Health Radar* that natural remedies can dramatically decrease most kinds of arthritis pain and improve function.

“This is especially important because arthritis medications unnecessarily kill an estimated 50,000 Americans yearly,” he says. “About 16,500 of these deaths are caused by bleeding ulcers, and there is a tremendous increase in the incidence of heart attack and strokes from these drugs.”

Vitamins, Minerals, Herbs, and Topicals

Natural options usually take six weeks to start working, and often resolve arthritis pain in three months.

The first step is to feed your joints, says Teitelbaum. Start with a good multivitamin and add glucosamine sulfate in a dose of 750 mg twice daily. If the pain is severe, add 400 mg of chondroitin twice daily.

Next, add methylsulfonylmethane (MSM) to the mix. This is a chemical derived from food sources and naturally produced by the body, says Kamhi, but levels decrease with age.

Supplementation can help reduce inflammation

and pain. It’s especially good for very stubborn cases, notes Teitelbaum, who suggests taking 2,500 mg per day.

The next phase is to balance inflammation, and there are several herbal remedies that are effective. The herbs curcumin and Boswellia are excellent choices to reduce inflammation. A product called Curamin contains high quality, easily absorbed versions of these herbs and includes a compound called DLPA to enhance your body’s natural pain-relieving mechanisms.

“This mix has been shown to be as effective as Celebrex in head-on studies looking at both regular and rheumatoid arthritis,” notes Teitelbaum.

You can also use topical creams to help fight inflammation. “Topical application of medicinal herbs can help reduce pain and increase circulation to the affected joints,” says Kamhi. Creams that contain menthol, Boswellia, capsaicin, or wintergreen are helpful. “But make sure you use them topically and not orally,” warns the expert.

The Arthritis Foundation suggests using an over-the-counter pain gel called Voltaren for easing arthritic pain safely.

Teitelbaum adds that if you have inflammatory arthritis characterized by red, swollen joints, taking a fish oil supplement daily may be beneficial.

More Natural Therapies

Other natural therapies to relieve arthritis pain, according to the Arthritis Foundation, include:

- **Acupuncture.** This form of Chinese medicine involves inserting thin, small needles through the skin at specific points on the body to stimulate nerves, muscles, and connective tissue, improve blood flow, and activate the body’s natural painkillers.
- **Massage.** Gentle manipulation with moderate pressure has been shown to reduce joint pain and stiffness. Not only will massage soothe and relax you, but it also improves range of motion.
- **Yoga.** Yoga has been shown to decrease joint pain and stiffness, as well as improve relaxation and reduce stress.

“It’s also important to eat a well-balanced diet, exercise, and maintain a healthy weight to reduce arthritis pain naturally,” says Teitelbaum. □