

Alternative Approaches to Arthritis



Arthritis is the leading cause of disability in America. *Arthritis* is simply Latin for inflammation of the joint. The word describes the major symptom of arthritic conditions, which are inflammation that causes pain, stiffness and limited range of motion in the joints. These symptoms may come and go, and be mild, moderate or severe. They can remain unchanged for years, or they can worsen over time. In its most severe form, arthritis is debilitating, resulting in difficulty performing simple activities, such as walking or climbing stairs.

Although arthritis is more common as people get older, anyone can develop it. In fact, about 300,000 children have some form of the disease, which also affects 53 million adults. Since the word arthritis simply describes a symptom—joint inflammation, it's important to know that this symptom has many different causes. In fact, there are more than 100 different types of arthritic conditions, including allergic arthritis, gonorrheal arthritis, gouty (aka metabolic) arthritis, hemophilic arthritis, menopausal arthritis and tuberculous arthritis. In this newsletter we're only going to discuss the two main forms, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis, although many of the suggestions we have for these two types of arthritis may be helpful for other types.

Osteoarthritis

This form of arthritis afflicts the largest number of people (27 million) and is most common in middle-aged and elderly people. In this condition, the cartilage that coats the ends of the bones begins to break down, starting a vicious cycle of further damage and reduced function. It is not a systemic disease. It is caused by local wear and tear, trauma, surgery, or infection that damages a specific joint.

Symptoms of osteoarthritis typically include pain in the affected joint(s) after repeated use—especially late in the day, swelling, pain and stiffness after long periods of inactivity that subside with movement. In advanced cases, there may be continual pain, even at rest.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

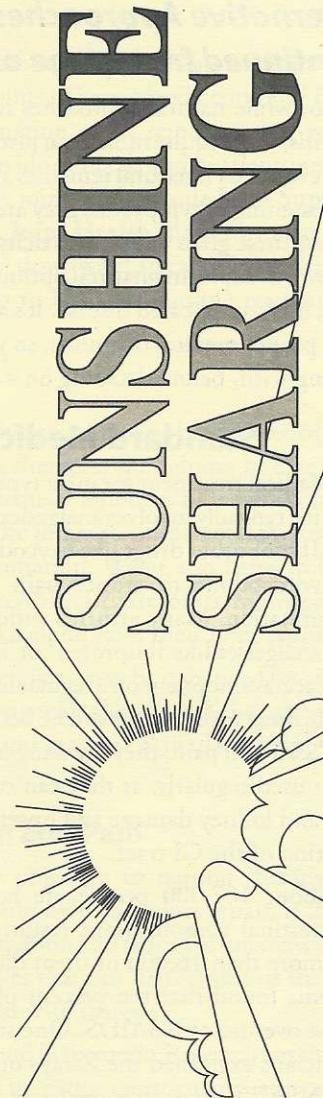
This form of arthritis is more rare than osteoarthritis, occurring in less than one percent of the population. It afflicts women three times more often than men. Unlike osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease, meaning the tissues that surround and cushion the joints are attacked by the body's immune system. This form of arthritis can affect other tissues besides the joints and usually develops between the ages of 25 and 50.

Symptoms generally include swollen, warm, painful joints—especially after long periods of inactivity, fatigue and occasional fever. There are typically symmetrical patterns of inflammation (if one wrist is afflicted, the other will be also) and inflammation and pain in the small joints of the body (hands, fingers, feet, toes, wrists, elbows and ankles). As rheumatoid arthritis progresses, the joints often become deformed and may freeze in one position, making movement difficult.

Is There a Cure?

Keeping in mind that there are over 100 different types of arthritis, the medical answer to the question, "Can arthritis be cured?" is, "No, most types of arthritis can only be treated." The treatment is drugs that ease symptoms of pain and inflammation, but do not return the joints to a healthy, symptom-free state. In contrast, many natural healers believe that arthritis can be cured, but to do so, one has to do two things. First, one must correctly identify what is damaging the joints and stop the damage, and secondly, one has to obtain the nutrients and make the lifestyle changes needed for joint repair.

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Important Notice

The information in *Sunshine Sharing* is for educational purposes only and should not be used to diagnose and treat diseases. If you have a health problem, we recommend you consult a competent health practitioner before embarking on any course of treatment.

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So, while natural approaches may be able to actually reverse arthritis, they require more than just taking a few capsules or tablets. However, even if natural remedies are only used to bring remission or a lessening of symptoms, they are still valuable because they can achieve these goals with less toxicity and fewer side effects. So, it is well worth exploring natural options in the treatment of this common, but complicated disease. It's always a good idea, however, to get a proper medical diagnosis, so you know exactly what you are dealing with, before deciding on a treatment protocol.

Standard Medical Treatment

Medical treatment for most types of arthritis typically involves analgesics like NSAIDs or other drugs like oxycodone or hydrocodone to reduce pain and inflammation. Many arthritis sufferers take analgesics like Ibuprofen® or Tylenol® (acetaminophen) on a regular basis. While these medications can be helpful for occasional pain, they are dangerous when used regularly, as they can cause liver and kidney damage and upset the function of the GI tract.



About 107,000 people are hospitalized each year for gastrointestinal complications resulting from the use of NSAIDs, and more than 16,000 of them die each year. A study of dialysis patients found that ten percent of them were in treatment due to the overuse of NSAIDs. One study conducted by Norwegian physicians examined the X-rays of 294 arthritic hips, suggesting that NSAIDs may do more harm than good.

In cases of rheumatoid arthritis, doctors may offer a counterirritant, disease-modifying or biologic drug to discourage the immune system from attacking the joints. All of these drugs can also produce serious side effects, especially the corticosteroid drugs such as prednisone and cortisone.

In addition to these drug regimens, doctors typically recommend physical therapy and exercises to extend a person's range of motion and strengthen the muscles surrounding the joints. In some cases, splints or braces may be recommended. These recommendations are generally helpful, but when all else fails they recommend a surgical procedure such as joint fusion or joint replacement.

Examining the Alternatives

Natural therapies may also include anti-inflammatories and analgesics as alternatives to drugs for symptomatic relief, but also involve seeking to eliminate the root causes of the joint irritation. As mentioned, natural therapy also involves improving nutrition to help joints repair themselves.

We begin with the understanding that living bones and joints aren't like the dry, bleached-white bones one might find lying in the desert sand. As living tissue, they are capable of growth, change and repair. This is why natural healers believe that a cure

is possible when we remove the sources of irritation and supply the conditions needed for optimal tissue regeneration and repair. Here are some basic strategies to help achieve this.

Eliminate Mechanical Stress

In osteoarthritis, the stress on the joints is often mechanical. It may be the result of injury, poor posture, excess weight or repetitive habits of movement caused by work. Bodywork in the form of chiropractic care, massage therapy, stretching, physical therapy and so forth may be very helpful in creating better structural alignment and removing stress from the joints. If excess weight is putting stress on joints (like the knees), then weight loss is obviously important.

Adopt a Healthier Diet

While mechanical irritation may be a factor in arthritis, most of the damage to the joints is biochemical or infectious, not structural. Factors like environmental toxins, nutritional deficiencies and foods that cause allergies or sensitivities can increase inflammatory reactions in the joints. So, the most important steps towards a cure (or at least a complete remission) involve adopting a diet and lifestyle that reduces chronic inflammation. The following suggestions are not only helpful for arthritis, but for improving overall health, as well.

1) Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, especially green leafy vegetables. Fruits and vegetables help to reduce inflammation in the body, and dark green vegetables are good sources of minerals that can help to rebuild bones and joints. However, you may need to avoid orange juice and vegetables in the nightshade family (tomatoes, potatoes, green peppers and eggplant). Nightshades can be problematic for many people with arthritis because they contain substances that inhibit mineral absorption in bones and joints. Increasing the intake of fat soluble vitamins (A, D3, K-2) may help to counteract this.



2) Avoid refined carbohydrates of all types, especially refined sugars, as these increase inflammation and also deplete mineral stores in the body, making bones and joints more susceptible to damage. It may even be helpful to reduce consumption of grains in general, even whole grains, if your blood sugar tends to run high.

3) Avoid vegetable oils, which are high in omega-6 fatty acids (corn, soy, peanut, sunflower, safflower, grapeseed and canola), as these oils tend to be pro-inflammatory. This means avoiding deep fried foods, most potato and corn chips and most commercial salad dressings. Also avoid transfatty acids, which are known to trigger systemic inflammation. Transfatty acids fat can be found in fast foods and other fried products, processed snack foods, frozen breakfast products, cookies, donuts, crackers, shortening and margarine.

4) Supplement with good fats and fat soluble vitamins. Use olive oil for salads, real butter, and ghee and coconut oil for cooking. Increasing one's intake of omega-3 fatty acids, which tend to be anti-inflammatory, using a supplement like **Super Omega-3 EPA** can be very helpful. It may also be helpful to supplement with **Vitamin A&D, vitamin D3 and Krill Oil with K-2.**

5) Avoid processed foods containing preservatives, artificial sweeteners and other chemicals, especially MSG and aspartame. All of these substances are irritating to the body. It's also wise to avoid alcohol and caffeine, especially coffee.

6) In the case of rheumatoid arthritis, it's probably a good idea to try eliminating gluten and casein. Gluten is found in wheat, rye, barley and any foods made with these grains. Casein is found in all dairy foods and whey protein products. Both of these substances are known to help trigger autoimmune reactions. A mild cleansing program to help heal the GI tract may also be helpful in autoimmune disorders.

7) Some people have found that periodic juice fasting can be very helpful for arthritis, especially rheumatoid arthritis. Vegetable juices are best and should always include some greens such as kale, Swiss chard, beet greens and celery. Juice fasts should be done using fresh, raw juices only and should last two-three days. If pain and stiffness don't improve within this time period, then juice fasting will not likely be helpful for your type of arthritis.



Get Nutrients Needed for Joint Repair

If you want to help the joints heal themselves, it is critical to get the nutrients the body needs to build healthy joints. One of the best ways to get these nutrients is to make bone broth. This involves simmering bones, meat scraps and vegetables for at least 4-8 hours or longer. Recipes can be found online or in Sally Fallon's book *Nourishing Traditions*, which is a great guide to healthy eating. Bone broth is rich in minerals, proteins and other joint healing nutrients, including glucosamine, chondroitin and hyaluronic acid.

If you don't want to make bone broth, you can add collagen to your diet by taking **Collatrim** capsules or powder. These products contain collagen, which is very helpful for rebuilding damaged cartilage in osteoarthritis. It can also help to strengthen bones and muscles.

Another great joint rebuilding supplement is **Everflex**. The ingredients in Everflex encourage joint health by helping to lubricate the joints, increasing shock absorption in the joints, improving flexibility, and promoting tissue and cartilage repair. It contains chondroitin sulfate, glucosamine and hyaluronic acid, which can help to rebuild a substance called aggrecan, which gives joints shock absorbing power. These nutrients may also ease pain and inflammation, along with the MSM and Devil's claw also found in this formula.

Minerals are also critical to rebuilding damaged joints. Silica is particularly valuable, as it works with calcium to add resiliency to bones and joints, making them less susceptible to damage. **HSN-W** contains dulse and horsetail, two of the richest known sources of silica in the plant kingdom and is very helpful for healthy hair, skin and fingernails as well as joints.

Another formula to consider is **Skeletal Strength**, which blends vitamins, minerals and herbs to provide nutrients needed for building healthy bones. These nutrients may also benefit the joints.

Joint Healing Formulas

There are formulas that combine herbs that can work on multiple levels to help arthritic joints. These blends combine herbs that reduce pain and inflammation, with remedies that gently enhance detoxification and provide minerals and nutrients needed to help heal and rebuild healthy joints and include **Joint Support** and its Ayurvedic counterpart, **Joint Health**. Both formulas may help to slow or even reverse the downward spiral of joint damage in osteoarthritis and may help to balance immune reactions in rheumatoid arthritis.

Hydration

Sometimes the simplest of things can make a big difference, and one of the easiest and cheapest therapies for helping to ease pain and repair joints is to drink adequate amounts of water. Water is what lubricates and cushions the joints so moderate dehydration may be a factor in joint inflammation. Water also helps to flush acids and toxins from the system which irritate joints. Many people find that increasing water intake alone eases their joint pains.

The benefits of water for the joints may be enhanced by taking the Chinese formula **KB-C** along with the water. KB-C strengthens the kidneys and the bones and may be particularly helpful for back and knee pain.

Reducing Inflammation and Pain

Even though our primary objective in natural therapy for arthritis is to remove irritants and help the joints repair, it is still important to reduce the inflammation and pain. Fortunately, there are a number of natural remedies that can help with this that are free of the side effects associated with drugs.

One of these is curcumin found in turmeric. Research has shown that both turmeric and one of its major constituents, curcumin, have anti-inflammatory properties. Curcumin supplements have been demonstrated to be effective in easing pain and inflammation in both rheumatoid and osteoarthritis. **CurcuminBP** combines curcumin with black pepper for better assimilation.

If Relief is a blend that contains turmeric along with boswellia, white willow bark, mangosteen and andrographis. Like turmeric, research has shown that boswellia can be helpful for reducing pain and inflammation associated with arthritis, while white willow bark contains aspirin-like compounds and has been used for thousands of years to ease joint pain.

Relief Formula also contains boswellia, turmeric and willow bark, along with other pain relieving and inflammation-reducing herbs. Both **If Relief** and **Relief Formula** are great alternatives to

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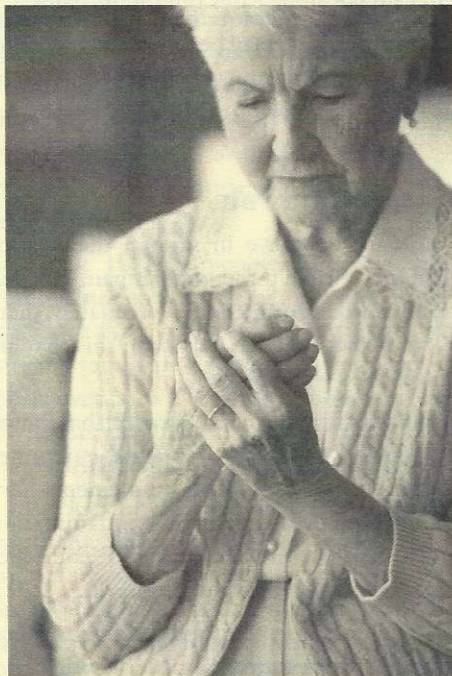
Additional Help and Information

For more information about natural approaches to healing arthritis contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products, 6th edition by Steven Horne and Kimberly Balas

The Golden Seven Plus One by Dr. C. Samuel West

There is a Cure for Arthritis by Paavo Airola



Can Arthritis Be Cured?

Most medical sources would say, “no.” However, many people claim that adopting a holistic approach to the disease has resulted in symptoms completely going away. Whether this is just a remission, or a complete cure, the fact is that natural remedies can do a lot more for arthritic conditions than just ease the pain and inflammation. They can remove sources of irritation and provide nutrients that help joints repair and rebuild themselves. Plus, natural anti-inflammatories may help ease the pain as efficiently as their drug counterparts, but without the side effects.

So, if you, or someone you love, suffers from arthritis, the information in this issue of Sunshine Sharing may help them to improve the quality of their life. In a disease where modern medicine offers little more than symptomatic relief, exploring alternative remedies is well worth the effort.

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NSAIDs, which can be used for symptomatic relief of arthritis pain and stiffness. However, unlike their drug counterparts, they also tend to enhance healing of the tissues, especially when used along with dietary changes and nutritional supplements for joint health.

Topical Analgesics and Self Massage

An amazingly simple, but very effective way to reduce joint pain and promote healing is to do self-massage using topical analgesics. If you can rub the pain away, healing the joint is possible. The secret is to massage the joint again before the pain returns. So, if you massage the joints and the pain returns in three hours, then massage the joint every two hours.

Two great topical analgesics to use as part of this massage process are **Tei Fu Massage Lotion** and **MSM/Glucosamine Cream**. Tei

Fu helps to numb the pain, but stimulates circulation to bring oxygen and nutrients to damaged tissues. MSM/Glucosamine cream reduces inflammation and promotes healing of the joints. You can even use them both, applying the MSM/Glucosamine cream first followed by the Tei Fu lotion.

Other Remedies

There are many other remedies that can reduce arthritic inflammation and promote healing. These include **Whole Leaf Aloe Vera**, **Yucca** and **Devil's claw**. Yucca is particularly valuable as an alternative to corticosteroids for joint inflammation. Devil's claw is an excellent analgesic and Whole Leaf Aloe Vera juice modulates immune responses in rheumatoid arthritis. You can also use nutritional supplements to reduce inflammation, such as **Thai Go** and **Super ORAC**. For more ideas, talk to the person who gave you this newsletter.