

# Alternative Treatments For Arthritis

Arthritis presently affects one person in five in the UK. There is no effective conventional treatment, although some drugs, such as anti-inflammatory ease the pain. Unfortunately they have a high incidence of side-effects, particularly involving the stomach. Most doctors feel there is little than can be done about osteoarthritis apart from pain relief but this is not the case. Patients with rheumatoid arthritis do respond to drugs but these are often high in side-effects and need monitoring with blood tests.

Arthritis was virtually unknown in many pre-industrial societies, and this gives us a major clue on what to do. I believe the first place we need to look is our diet which has become more and more unnatural.

## FOOD AND ARTHRITIS

Several pioneers in this field have had excellent results in treating arthritis with diet. Here are their recommendations. They have many similarities.

### Dr Campbell's Diet

Avoid the following foods: flour of any kind, including white flour, corn flour, rye flour, soy flour. Avoid all flour products including bread, biscuits, cakes, crackers, spaghetti, pasta, macaroni, pizza, noodles. Stop coffee, tea, alcohol, colas, fizzy drinks, soft drinks. Stop sugar, sweets, ice-cream, artificial sweeteners. Avoid canned or processed food such as custard, puddings and prepared mixes. Stop jellies, jams and marmalades. Avoid any food manufactured or adulterated by man such as breakfast cereals and semi-prepared meals. Avoid citrus fruits in the initial stages.

Dr Campbell found that on this diet, heat and swelling was relieved in one week, pain was relieved in two weeks and normal movement occurred in three weeks. Healing on Xray took 3 to 6 months. He also believed that avoiding constipation was critical to the success of his program.

### Dr Deforest Clinton Jarvis

He recommended avoiding wheat products, white sugar, pasteurised milk, muscle meats and citrus fruits.

### Paavo Airola

He had a high incidence of success in treating arthritis in a Swedish clinic. He avoided all processed food and used fresh fruits, juices and salads.

## **Margaret Hill**

Whilst training to be a nurse Margaret Hill developed rheumatoid arthritis at the age of 21. She found a regime of natural remedies that worked for her leading to her book "Curing Arthritis the Drug-Free Way".

Her treatment includes cider vinegar, molasses and Epsom salt baths. It also involves exercise, vitamin supplement and an acid free diet: one which removes sugar, white flour, processed food, beef, pork and alcohol. People who have recovered using her regime include Ralph Fiennes.

## **Dr Dan Alexander**

He wrote Arthritis and Common Sense and recommended avoiding citrus fruit, tea, coffee, carbonated drinks and sugar.

Perhaps we can see why more primitive people get little arthritis. Their diet is similar to the diets shown above. By using these diets you achieve **two critically important things**. Firstly you supply the body with lots of the crucial nutrients and secondly you remove all the toxins and chemicals that are poisoning the body and causing the arthritis in the first place. Note also that this type of diet will reduce your risk of cancer and heart disease as well.

Another and somewhat different approach in osteoarthritis is **avoiding the deadly nightshade vegetables**. These are potato, tomato, peppers, aubergines, chilli, curry, nicotine, paprika which can aggravate arthritis in some. The deadly night shade plants can cause arthritic symptoms for up to 3 months after eating so leave them off ideally for 12 weeks (minimum 6 weeks) and see if this helps.

## **FOOD INTOLERANCE AND RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS**

Food intolerance can be an important cause of rheumatoid arthritis. Sadly most doctors and most rheumatologists remain unaware of this. And yet this could lead to an effective drug-free solution to a major disease in many patients. It's worth reviewing the evidence.

A trial published in the Lancet in 1986 by Darlington, Ramsey and Mansfield found 75% of patients with rheumatoid arthritis had major improvements or became totally well after eliminating foods they were intolerant to. Another major trial, done in three environmental control units in the USA, produced similar results: 80% had fair to excellent responses after removal of foods they were intolerant to. The remaining 20% were non-responders. However the latter group were those who had received prolonged steroid treatment. Wheat, corn and animal proteins were found to be the foods which most often triggered arthritis.

Two later studies of food intolerance in RA were negative but these were seriously flawed as they did not eliminate grains. These just happen to be the most potent triggers for RA. A further study from the University of Oslo in 1991 compared those on

an exclusion diet with controls. Those on the diet had highly significant improvements in joint swelling, pain and blood tests.

These results, taken as a whole, are impressive. They confirm that RA responds well to the detection and elimination of food intolerances. It is disappointing that an effective treatment remains hidden away in the medical literature, virtually unused by mainstream medicine.

Practitioners who work in this field find about 50% of all arthritis is linked to food intolerance.

## **MORE ON FOOD AND ARTHRITIS**

Studies of twins in the UK have shown strong **protective effect** on development of osteoarthritis of the hip from eating non citrus fruits and allium vegetables (onion, garlic, leeks) and **increased risk** from French fries and roast potatoes. It was thought that AGEs (advanced glycation end products) from these products of high temperature cooking caused inflammation in the cartilage.

**A study of 2149 people found that just one sugary drink daily caused acceleration of progression of osteoarthritis of the knee and more sugary drinks accelerated this process further.**

Two studies of 1350 and 975 individuals with osteoarthritis found **metabolic syndrome** was present in 62.5% and 59% respectively (normally 20% of population). Metabolic syndrome, sometimes called insulin resistance, occurs when the body has difficulty dealing with sugars and other refined carbohydrates (such as white flour products). It can be checked with a blood test for lipids.

**Good foods** in arthritis are **fruit and vegetables**, fish, brown rice, garlic, ginger and onions.

**Bad foods** are **sugar** (which leaches calcium out of the bones), **flour, fried foods, hydrogenated fats, carbonated drinks** (which also reduce bone calcium), alcohol, tea and coffee and sugar-starch combinations such as pies, cakes and many deserts. Just avoiding these will allow your body to start unloading toxins and bring your energy level up a notch.

Consider buying a juicer as fruit and vegetable juices are some of the most nutritious substances known to man. Use organic produce wherever possible both to increase the nutrients and to avoid concentrating pesticides.

One study showed after having broccoli soup three times weekly for 6 months, 80% of the group reported a major improvement in their condition.

**Consider using short detoxification diets** such as having nothing but fruit and vegetable juice for one or two days. Repeat this every one or two months and your arthritis and your health will usually start to improve (even though you feel rough at the time).

**Bone Broth:** This is made by boiling the bones from the carcass of a chicken in boiling water for 4 to 8 hours. The bone and cartilage break down to give many nutrients, essential for joint function. Normally cider vinegar is added to the water with onion and garlic. The broth can be strained off and can be frozen for later use.

## **NUTRIENTS**

There are some useful nutrients for arthritis:

### **MSM (methylsulfonylmethane)**

This sulphur-containing supplement is found naturally in the body. It is also found in animals and plants. It has a slightly bitter taste. Sulphur is known to be low in arthritic joints. One study found it effective in 60% of patients with osteoarthritis at 4 weeks and 82% at 6 weeks. It appears to work even better in rheumatoid arthritis. It comes in many forms including capsules, powder, crystals, gel and creams.

A starting dose is one gram (1000mg) three times daily increasing by one gram every few days until easing of symptoms. Typically it takes between two to four weeks to work. Long-standing pain will take longer and it may be necessary to increase the dose appreciably for severe pain. The usual dose is up to 8 grams daily but it has no toxic effects in animals at doses equivalent to 500 grams daily in humans. Some people need doses of 40 to 60 grams daily. Stop if you get nausea or loose stools. It has a slight blood-thinning effect so it should be avoided by those taking blood-thinning medication like warfarin. Combining oral medication with a cream or gel adds to its effect. It can also improve energy, help nail and hair growth, reduce allergies and lead to a smoother skin.

The actor James Coburn developed severe rheumatoid arthritis in his later years suffering from constant pain and physical deformity. He tried a range of conventional and alternative treatments with minor improvements. In 1998 he started MSM and his pain eased within three days. He took 6 grams twice daily and within 6 months he was pain-free and back to playing tennis.

### **Glucosamine sulphate:**

Use at a dose of 500mg three times a day (generally available from chemists and health food stores although prices can vary markedly and usually more expensive than MSM). About 20 studies show that it is effective at this dosage. The body needs glucosamine to build cartilage. You need to take this for 2-3 months before getting the benefit and then reduce the dosage. It may not work if taken with food and should be taken away from meals. One study has shown that unhealthy cartilage was replaced by healthy cartilage in those taking glucosamine. Chondroitin sulphate is a similar substance but is absorbed less well (between 250mg to 1 gm daily) and can also help but often takes up to 3 months. (These substances are also found in bone both).

Overall glucosamine seems less effective than MSM in osteoarthritis and has virtually no effect in rheumatoid arthritis, especially for hip and knee arthritis but these remedies work well when combined.

### **Niacinamide for Osteoarthritis.**

Niacinamide is a form of vitamin B3 **is one of the most useful remedies ever discovered for arthritis but remains largely unknown.** It was discovered by Dr William Kaufman in the 1940s. Initially he tried it on a patient with such severe arthritis he could not bend his elbows. After a week on niacinamide he could bend his arms again.

He found that the greater the severity of the disease the more niacinamide that was needed, with severely crippled patients needing up to 4000mg daily (Kaufman found that up to ten times this amount was safe). He observed that a single large dose was ineffective but more frequent doses spread throughout the day worked well. Those on large doses sometimes needed ten doses throughout the day. Kaufman sometimes added large doses of Vitamin C, thiamine (vitamin B1) and riboflavin (vitamin B2) to his protocol.

Dr Kaufman's extensive experience with niacinamide in arthritis can be found on <http://www.doctoryourself.com>

A further study in 1996 again found it to be an effective remedy for arthritis. The dose was 150mg six times daily rising to a maximum of 3000mg daily. Those receiving it had 29% improvement whereas those receiving the placebo had a 10% deterioration. Kaufman used up to 4000mg daily and found smaller but more frequent doses of 250mg were 50% more effective than the 500mg doses. Improvement usually takes 3 to 12 weeks with complete recovery taking three years in the most severe cases. It is best used with a high protein, low carbohydrate diet. (It is almost impossible to obtain adequate levels of niacinamide from the diet).

### **Pantothenic Acid for Rheumatoid Arthritis**

Pantothenic acid is Vitamin B5, a vitamin that gets little attention. However it can pack quite a punch. Phyllis Eisenstein has described how she developed severe arthritis from the age of 17. This continued for 10 years and she was seen by many specialists and had all available treatments. None had a lasting effect. She was walking with a cane and crutches, in continuous pain and was told all she could do is take painkillers and learn to live with.

However she didn't learn to live with it. After reading about various supplements she started taking Vitamin B5 and her symptoms miraculously disappeared. She has continued taking the supplement and has remained well, free from pain and fully mobile for the last 25 years.

She started to research Vitamin B5 in her book "Overcoming the Pain of Inflammatory Arthritis" and notes studies in the 1960s showing that patients with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) had lower blood levels of vitamin B5 and excreted more of it in their urine. Drs Barton-White and Elliot gave 20 patients with RA pantothenic acid (50mg) by injection and their arthritis settled after seven days. They went on to treat osteoarthritis also with success. However the General Practice Research Group in 1980 found vitamin B5 was effective for RA but not for osteoarthritis. Research in the USSR also found it effective for inflammatory arthritis. A further trial by the author confirmed the findings of the General Practice Research Group: it was effective in rheumatoid but not osteoarthritis.

Phyllis Eisenstein recommends starting with 1 gram daily then reducing to whatever level controlled symptoms. It typically takes one to three weeks to work. It has been used safely in doses up to 15 grams (this dose was it used to successfully treat skin lesions in lupus). She also noted that people with other conditions such as pain following injury and back pain have responded well to vitamin B5. I have seen it work in plantar fasciitis and it may be worth a try in similar conditions such as tendinitis.

## **Essential fats**

The Omega 3 fats are the most important and the main source of these is from oily fish (herring, mackerels, sardines, pilchards, salmon) and from seeds, particularly linseed and pumpkin seeds. Add these to the diet and consider a supplement (especially if you have signs of deficiency like dry skin and thirst). The right balance of Omega 3 and Omega 6 fats is important (ideally 1:4). Flaxseed and fish oils are mainly Omega 3 whereas cold-pressed (not the standard refined) sunflower and safflower are Omega 6. Hemp oil contains both.

**Olive oil is also good. Take 6 tablespoonfuls of Extra Virgin Olive oil daily for one week and then 1 tablespoonful daily.** This has no Omega 3 or 6 but has other useful fats and may give additional help.

Cod liver oil has been used for many years for arthritis. Although there are worries about the accumulation of PCBs in fish oils this is still worth considering.

**Curcumin** –comes from turmeric. Hundreds of studies show it reduces inflammation.

Aim for 1000mg curcumin daily.

**Green-Lipped Mussel** – one study showed 1050mg of green-lipped muscle improved joint pain, stiffness and mobility in 76% of people. Patients taking this supplement for a year had developed new cartilage growth.

**Boswellic Acid** from the herb boswellia, reduces pain and blocks inflammation.

**Avocado-soybean unsaponifiables (ASU)** extracted avocado & soybean oil – prescription drug in Europe –suppresses inflammation, improves X-ray appearance in joints, stops progression ofosteoarthritis.

**Swedish Bitters** These taste foul but are a well known remedy for osteoarthritis.

**Rose Hip** Reduces inflammation.

**Barley Grass** Barley grass and wheat grass are packed with living nutrients and can help in arthritis and many other diseases.

**Cat's Claw** Some people have noticed good improvements in their arthritis after using this Peruvian herb and the benefits can be quite rapid.

**Cider Vinegar** This is a cheap remedy which is well worth a try. Available from health food stores. On rising take two teaspoonfuls of cider vinegar in a tumbler of water. With each meal take two teaspoonfuls of cider vinegar and molasses with one teaspoonful of organic honey sipped during a meal in a tumbler of water. If you forget then take it away from meals. **Use for three months** – it will have had an effect by then if it is going to work. It may work without the molasses and honey but the combination is probably superior.

A combination of remedies is often better than one and it is a good idea to keep to the dietary guidelines if you are going to use remedies of any kind.

## **OTHER REMEDIES**

### **Epsom Salts**

Use in the bath. Put in as much as you can dissolve, usually two or three tablespoonfuls in each bath. Have the bath as hot as you can tolerate. Stay in for 20 to 30 minutes submerging as much of the body as possible. This **releases a lot of toxins** and this process will be aided by a good rub down or massage afterwards. Do this no more than once a week. For small joints you can immerse the joints in a bowl of hot water and Epsom salts.

### **Castor Oil Packs**

This is an excellent treatment that has been used for centuries. Soak three to four thicknesses of flannel or cloth with warmed but **not** boiled castor oil. (Eg. Warm over a radiator ) Put over the affected area or over the abdomen and cover with plastic or a towel or both. Put a heating pad or hot water bottle over and leave on for about an hour. Do several times a week for a deep healing effect. Once the cloth is set up it can be used for 20 to 30 times before you need an oil change. Cold-pressed castor oil is available from some health shops but not usually from chemists.

**Magnetic Devices** These have helped some people with arthritis.