

## TIPS FOR ARTHRITIS

The current thinking is that inflammation is at the core of arthritis – so any of the practices to reduce inflammation will help:

- Focus on getting fruits, vegetables and whole grains. These provide anti-oxidants and a whole host of other nutrients felt to benefit health.
  - Berries (especially blueberries and cranberries) and pomegranates are great.
  - But really – all fresh fruits and vegetables are good. Get a variety, eat a rainbow.
  - Focusing on these foods can help with weight loss, which lessens the load on your joints.
- Improve your omega 6 to omega 3 ratio (*the recommended level is a ratio of 4:1, the actual ration that most of us get is 16:1, and for some people as high as 50:1!*). The typical diet is high in grain-fed beef, refined cereals and grains and vegetable oils – all high in omega 6 fats. The body converts much of the omega-6 fats in to compounds that increase cell growth, blood clots and inflammation. Improve your ration by:
  - Use olive and canola oils (over corn, soybean, sunflower or safflower)
  - Eat fish twice a week
  - Buy grass-fed beef
  - Add flaxseed meal to foods
  - Eat a small handful of walnuts every day
  - Eliminate trans fats and hydrogenated fats
- If you take omega-3 in supplement form, get a supplement with 1,000 milligrams a day of EPA and DHA combined. Look for a omega-6: omega-3 ratio of 4:1. *Some studies show that omega-3 supplements offer as much pain control as NSAIDS (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, ie drugs like ibuprofen and naproxen ). Check with your doctor first – these supplements have a blood thinning effect which could cause a problem when combined with some medications.*
- Exercise is probably THE best pain medicine. Regular exercise improves mood, decreases pain, and keeps the body moving more easily. Regular physical activity means you'll have a third less chance of becoming disabled and being totally dependent on somebody.\* The American College of Rheumatology recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity 3-5 days a week – and that can be broken into three 10 minute bouts if needed. Be sure to include stretching and balance as well.
- Develop other ways to manage pain, such as meditation, breath, mindfulness techniques and limiting negative self-talk.
- Consider trying some supplements (be sure to check with your doctor)
  - Vitamin D is getting a lot of attention – probably most of us need more. Many experts are advocating 1000 mg/day for people over 50. This Vitamin could help with inflammation.
  - Glucosamine and Chondroitin sulfate is one of the most popular arthritis supplements. While the tests are inconclusive, they are promising enough to be worth a try. If you are allergic to shellfish, check with your doctor first. Chondroitin may not be safe if you have a clotting disorder or take anticlotting drugs (like coumadin). Aim for about 1,500 mg of glucosamine and 1,200 mg of condroitin.
  - Dr Andrew Weil recommends anti-inflammatory herbs such as Zyflamend (from New Chapter, the main ingredients are tumeric and ginger), and Holy Basil or Tulsi (400 – 500 mg extract 2 x day). His recommendations tend to be a little outside of the range of conventional medicine, but pretty moderate and well researched within the range of alternative medicine.

## Resources:

Arthritis Foundation: 800 568-4045 or [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases: [www.niams.nih.gov](http://www.niams.nih.gov)

The Arthritis Helpbook by Kate Lorig and James Fries (the companion resource for the Arthritis Foundation self-help course)

\*AARP: Nov/Dec 06- quoting Patience White, MD, the Arthritis Foundations Chief Public Health Officer.

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