

Special Report on Pain

Natural health care addresses the cause

Too often people in pain are given drugs to mask their symptoms, but no answers. It's like the story about the old man who went to the doctor complaining of pain in his right knee. The doctor prescribed pain medication, but the old man still wanted to know why his knee hurt. The doctor said, "Well Mr. Wuznuski, you are 78 years old—you have to expect some aches and pains." The old man pointed out the obvious, "But the other knee is also 78 years old, and it doesn't hurt." He wanted to know the cause and to have the cause treated and not merely mask his symptoms with drugs.

Chronic pain is the most costly health problem in America, with an estimated annual cost of about \$90 billion per year; 80% of all visits to the doctor are pain related. Nearly 43 million U.S. adults have been diagnosed with arthritis. As many as 45 million Americans have chronic, severe, often disabling headaches. In 2001, over 13 million people saw a physician for the treatment of back pain. According to the NIH, 65 to 80% of all people have back pain at some time in their life.

Patients tend to think of pain medicine as the only way to treat pain and inflammation. Many people automatically take medication when they have pain. Some people with chronic pain take medication regularly without giving it much thought. More than \$4 billion is spent each year on over-the-counter pain medications for headaches. Americans consume 20,000 tons of aspirin each year. But medication is not a cure for pain; and it often makes matters worse. Go to [OUR WEBSITE](#), where we have hundreds of research articles about pain and other health issues.

According to research appearing in the July 27, 1998 issue of the *American Journal of Medicine*, "Conservative calculations estimate that approximately 107,000 patients are hospitalized annually for nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID)-related gastrointestinal (GI) complications and at least 16,500 NSAID-related deaths occur each year among arthritis patients alone. The figures for all NSAID users would be overwhelming, yet the scope of this problem is generally under appreciated"

Other research links pain medications to high blood pressure, kidney failure, heart failure, ulceration of the GI tract, and some drugs even interfere with bone repair. In the July 23, 1996 *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 2,000 arthritic patients were studied, NSAID use increased their ulcer risk 10-fold, and almost 25% of NSAID users have ulcers, most of which are without symptoms.

Also, NSAIDs perpetuate the very problem that they are designed to treat. They actually increase the body's oxidative stress—leading to further inflammation and pain.

Research articles appearing in the journals the *Lancet* and in *Pharmacological Research Communications* have demonstrated that NSAIDs interfere with the formation of cartilage. So someone with arthritis who takes these drugs is trading short-term relief for long-term degeneration. The drugs actually make the condition worse.

One thing many arthritis sufferers have done is to take glucosamine sulfate or chondroitin sulfate products to help to restore cartilage. Many studies have shown that these products can help arthritis sufferers. Patients suffering from arthritis in the knee experienced relief in a study published in the journal, *Drugs and Aging*. The researchers concluded, "In short-term clinical trials, glucosamine provided effective symptomatic relief for patients with osteoarthritis of the knee. In addition, glucosamine has shown promising results in modifying the progression of arthritis over a 3-year period. Glucosamine may therefore prove to be a useful treatment option for osteoarthritis." The *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2000; 283(11):1469-75) acknowledged that these supplements may be of benefit to arthritis sufferers.

Patients hear about research like this, and their tendency is to go out and buy glucosamine supplements and to take them in place of the NSAIDs. They are still looking to a pill to solve their problem. Scientific studies contribute to this thinking. Researchers will give one group in the study a drug and the other group will take glucosamine or chondroitin supplements—they are merely comparing one pill to another. Generally, in the beginning of the study, the people taking the drug will feel better than the group taking the supplements, but as time progresses, the group taking the supplements do better. This should be obvious, because the supplements help to repair cartilage and the drugs destroy it. The drugs also undermine the body's general health and make it more prone to inflammation—short term relief turns into long term degeneration.

Taking herbs can indeed help reduce pain and inflammation. And there is research supporting their value. The problem is that people want to use these things like they are drugs—addressing symptoms. But natural health care works best when you combine diet, lifestyle and therapy. In natural health care, you are not treating symptoms, but improving the body's infrastructure to overcome the pain. Healthy bodies don't hurt. Many natural products are useful and effective, but they would be much more effective as part of a comprehensive program. When you use natural health care, you are not necessarily treating symptoms; you are treating causes.

There is a lot of research to support the importance of diet and exercise in eliminating pain. How you live and what you eat really does have an effect on how much pain you feel. Eating a diet that is high in fresh fruit and vegetables will decrease your pain and inflammation. In a study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Researchers at the University of Athens Medical School found that people who ate the highest amount of cooked vegetables had a 75% lesser risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis than those who ate few vegetables. Also, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* has published

research that a diet high in vegetables and olive oil—the so called “Mediterranean Diet” helps to reduce pain and inflammation.

A combination of fish oil and vitamin E reduced the levels of cytokines (which are pro-inflammatory proteins that cause the joint swelling, pain and tenderness). Fish oil, in general is anti-inflammatory. Dr Richard Sperling, found in his research that fish oil may reduce inflammatory substances produced by white blood cells. Professor Caterson and other Scientists at Cardiff University in Wales have found that the Omega-3 fatty acids in cod liver oil work to inhibit enzymes that break down joint cartilage. There is a lot of research to support the use of omega-3 fatty acids for reducing inflammation.

Consuming a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids, like those found in fish oil will help to reduce pain and inflammation. Patients need to avoid foods that promote pain and inflammation. High fat and high sugar diets promote inflammation, according to research appearing in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Even the *Journal of the American Medical Association* has published research that says a low-sugar diet reduces inflammatory markers.

Exercise can also help to reduce pain. Children with juvenile arthritis took part in an eight-week individualized program of resistance exercise at the University at Buffalo. Their ability to function was greatly improved by the exercise. Some improved by as much as 200%. According to a study, found in the *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, Tai Chi can reduce arthritic pain.

A review of strategies for to reduce pain and inflammation—all of which are backed by research:

Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Eat live food, brightly colored produce—natural foods that are dark green, purple, yellow, orange, or red. Those rich colors are actually antioxidants that protect the plant. They contain antioxidants and phytochemicals that protect your cells as well.

Avoid foods that contain refined sugar, or high fructose corn syrup; like soda pop, candy cookies, donuts and other sweet snacks. Also avoid refined grains like white bread, white noodles. These foods are promote pain and inflammation.

Change your oil—the chemicals that produce inflammation are made from fatty acids. Certain fats are anti-inflammatory, and some contribute to pain and inflammation. Absolutely avoid hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils, avoid trans fats—these are linked to cancer and heart disease, but they are also linked to pain and inflammation. This is huge—it is vital that patients avoid hydrogenated oils and trans fats—that step alone has gotten many people out of chronic pain. Animal fats are also linked to inflammation—eat

lean meats, chicken and fish and avoid high fat items like bacon and sausage. Omega 3 fatty acids, like those found in fish oil and in flax seed oil are very useful for reducing pain and inflammation.

Avoid chemical additives. These promote inflammation

Get moving—get some exercise.

There are nutritional products that will help to reduce pain and inflammation—but if you are consistent with making the above dietary recommendations, your patients' results will improve. Try not to use supplements in place of drugs—make them part of a comprehensive program.

Supplements and Natural Health Care Help with Pain and Inflammation (also well-researched)

You need to get to the cause of the problem. Natural health care addresses the cause of pain—not merely the symptom. Please do not hesitate to contact our office