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Arthritis Relief & Prevention

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ARTHRITIC PREVENTION & SELF CARE

INTRODUCTION

Arthritis is a big issue. Look at some introductory facts. Referred to as the nation's number one crippling disease and the most common chronic disease in people over 40, arthritis affects more than 40 million Americans. And this figure is expected to rise to 60 million by 2020, according to the Center for Disease Control.

Arthritis generally afflicts people between the ages of 20 and 50, but can affect all ages, even infants. The average age of onset is 47 and about three out of every five people with arthritis are under 65 years of age.

Arthritic expenditures for just one person due to lost wages, medical treatment and other related expenses can come to more than \$150,000 in his or her lifetime.

And doctors believe there are over 100 different forms of arthritis, all sharing one main characteristic: all forms cause joint inflammation.

What can be done for arthritis relief? Many things. For example, weight and nutrition are only a couple of factors that play a role in arthritic pain. And yet shedding even 10 pounds to relieve weight from knees and finding the right nutritional strategy can help relieve pain a lot.

This ebook will present you with the most recent research and findings available

so that you can learn more about arthritis relief, covering as many bases as possible from A to Z. Note that the contents here are not presented from a medical practitioner, and that any and all health care planning should be made under the guidance of your own medical and health practitioners. The content within only presents an overview of arthritis relief research for educational purposes and does not replace medical advice from a professional physician.

ARTHRITIC BASICS

Arthritis signals people in a variety of ways. Joints might crack suddenly, like knees upon standing. Other joints may be stiff and creak. Maybe pain occurs, like when trying to open a jar. What's it all about? Let's look at the basics and learn more.

Arthritis actually means "joint inflammation" and has over 100 related conditions or type / forms of disease. Left untreated, it can advance, resulting in joint damage that cannot be undone or reversed. So early detection and treatment are important.

The **two most common types** of arthritis are **osteoarthritis (OA)** and **rheumatoid arthritis (RA)**. Although both have similar symptoms, both happen for different reasons. When joints are overused and misused, the results can be OA. What happens is that the cushioning cartilage that protects the joint breaks down, resulting in the bones rubbing together. This generally happens in the knees, but can be found in the hips, spine and hands often, too. And only in later stages will a person most often feel pain, after quite a bit of cartilage is lost.

The second type, RA, refers to the body's immune system attacking joint tissue. Still not fully understood in the medical community, this condition most often starts in a person's hands, wrists and feet. Then it advances to shoulders, elbows and hips.

Similar symptoms include pain, stiffness, fatigue, weakness, slight fever and inflamed tissue lumps under the skin. And both OA and RA generally develop symmetrically, i.e. affecting the same joints on both the left and right sides of the body.

A difference in OA and RA to note is with swelling. With RA, people report “soft and squishy” swelling. While with OA, people report “hard and bony” swelling.

Another difference is that a person is more likely to develop RA if a sibling or parent had it. While a person with a history of joint damage, either an injury or chronic strain, runs a higher risk for developing OA.

There is no specific age for arthritis sufferers. While it can affect every age group, it seems to focus on those over 45 years of age.

And while neither gender is immune, a reported 74 percent of OA cases (or just over 15 million) occur with women and a slightly lower percentage of RA cases occur with women.

People with excess weight tend to develop OA, especially in the knees when reaching over 45 years of age. However, losing weight can turn the odds around almost by half. Regular activity combined with exercise also reduces risk, strengthening joint muscles and reducing joint wear.

Although there are no cure-alls for arthritis, there are a variety of pain relief treatment strategies. Aside from medications, remedies, replacement alternatives and other helpful treatment options and alternatives, the four main arthritis relief aids are gentle exercise, good nutrition, a positive attitude and rest. And each will be discussed further in subsequent sections, because education can play a huge role to dispel “old wives tales” and myths that “nothing can be done about arthritis.” Notable is that today,

only a small percentage of those afflicted with arthritis become crippled. And most never need canes, wheelchairs, or other ambulatory devices.

Also note if you suspect you may have arthritis, it is advisable to seek medical advice. Because healthcare providers can help to determine if the symptoms are not something else like a virus or tendonitis or other similar problem that could potentially worsen if left untreated.

BASIC SCIENCE OF ARTHRITIS

Joints can handle some heavy pressure. For example, knees handle a force of three to four times a person's total body weight on average just taking a walk. The force of a deep knee bend during a squat can increase to nine times the body weight. So just imagine multiplying weight of more than 150 pounds times a minimum of three or four, and then even more. That can sure add up to a lot of heavy work on knee joints over time.

Now for the science of this scenario. Where two bones meet, called the joint, the bone ends are covered with cartilage, also known as gristle. This cartilage is sturdy, elastic and spongy or compressible, and keeps the bones from moving against each other at the joint. The cells of this cartilage, called chondrocytes, are thought to be the longest living cells of the body.

Surrounding the bones and cartilage is strong, fibrous capsule lined with synovium, a thin membrane that lubricates the joint area with fluid. The end result is less friction or smoother rubbing together of the bones. This fluid also feeds the cartilage cells, keeping them healthy, and is "pumped" into them during joint movement. Thus lack of movement (activity / exercise) can be unhealthy.

Other parts of the body features involved with this arthritic scenario include muscles, tendons, ligaments, bursea and mental activity. Muscles, attached to bones with tendons and ligaments, move bones by contracting. They also cushion movement, absorbing impact or shock. Throughout the muscle and tendon areas are bursae or sacs filled with fluid. These also help cushion movement. And throughout all the coordination of these parts during movement, the brain is a part. The brain communicates via nerves throughout the body, in particular the muscles for this scenario, to prepare joints for activity.

The exact science of what actually causes arthritis is still being researched. For most of the 100-plus forms of arthritis, the causes are unknown. Injury, overuse of joints and mechanical issues with joints (like skeletal abnormalities, worn out joint muscles) can lead to arthritis. And many point to issues relating to bacteria and germs as some of the problem. Heredity, stress, drugs, food allergies and viruses have also been linked to some forms of arthritis. So have diet, poor circulation and lack of movement.

INFLAMMATION

Arthritic joints can be affected with inflammation when bacteria or a virus (or other undesirable element) enters the joint area or when an injury occurs. What happens is when foreign matter enters this area or the area sustains injury, white blood cells, antibodies and other natural “fighting” mechanisms automatically kick in internally to help. These fighters cause swelling, redness and heat as the body fluid moves around. Symptoms of inflammation, one of the uncomfortable issues associated with arthritis, are redness, swelling and tender joints.

OTHER MAIN TYPES OF ARTHRITIS

After osteoarthritis (OA) and rheumatoid arthritis (RA), three other major types of arthritis are systemic lupus erythematosus, ankylosing spondylitis and gout. Let's take a look at each.

Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) – This form of arthritis mainly affects women. It develops in the skin, internal organs and joints.

Ankylosing Spondylitis – This form of arthritis affects the spine and can also affect the ankles, knees, lungs, heart, shoulders and eyes.

Gout – This is a painful affliction mainly for men, about one million of them in the United States alone. Uric acid build up, due to an internal chemical malfunction, forms crystals that get stuck in a joint, generally the big toe, and become inflamed.

ARTHRITIC OPTIONS TODAY

There are many ways to effectively manage arthritic pain today to find relief. Available are arthritic diets, exercise programs, over-the-counter and prescription medications, relaxation and positive emotion coping techniques. Also available are surgeries, supplements, home remedies, natural and other alternative therapies. When arthritis is first suspected, it would be wise to seek a medical opinion first. Then as time and resources allow, check out the other options. The basics of each follow.

ARTHRITIC DIETS & NUTRITIONAL HEALING

There is a great deal of debate in the medical world about the effects of overall diet on arthritis and using diet toward alleviating the condition. Doctors have known for a long time that diet affects gout, a specific type of arthritic condition, however the jury remained out for a long time on other common types of arthritis such as rheumatoid and osteoarthritis.

However, overall dietary health is important and does come into play. Being overweight can affect certain arthritic conditions, forcing some joints to carry more of a load. This added weight stresses the joints, causing overuse or more wear to components, and pain, especially in the knees. So making sure arthritic sufferers eat good foods and get help from healthcare providers to create and follow a well-balanced dietary plan is advised.

To begin, here is a look at some vitamins, minerals, nutrients / foods and some herbal applications to consider.

VITAMINS

Vitamin B5 – When grouped and tanked together, B vitamins work at their peak. They, and B5 specifically, are good for reducing swelling.

Vitamin B3 – This vitamin reduces tissue swelling and dilates small arteries, increasing blood flow. Note that Vitamin B3 is NOT advised for persons with high blood pressure, gout or sliver disorders.

Vitamin B6 – Another B that reduces tissue swelling.

Vitamin B12 – This vitamin aids in multiple functions. It helps with cell formation, digestion, myelin production, nerve protection.

Vitamin C - This vitamin acts as an anti-inflammatory, relieving pain, and rids the body of free radicals.

Vitamin E – This is a strong antioxidant that protects joints from free radicals while increases joint flexibility.

Vitamin K – This vitamin assists with mineral deposit into the bone matrix.

MINERALS

Boron – This trace mineral aids in bone health.

Calcium – This is a much-needed mineral for bone health.

Magnesium – Magnesium helps keep calcium in balance within the system.

Zinc – This mineral is necessary for bone growth, but is often lacking in arthritic patients.

Manganese – Manganese is also necessary for bone growth. However, do not ingest manganese with calcium because they can work against each other.

Copper – Copper helps to strengthen connective tissue.

Germanium – This antioxidant helps with pain relief.

Sulfur – A lack of sulfur can result in deterioration of ligaments, cartilage, collagen and tendons.

NUTRIENT COMBOS

Chondroitin Sulfate – This lubrication in joints, joint fluid and connective tissue, can be found in the sea cucumber.

Gelatin – Help with raw cartilage replenishing with this cheap source.

Glucosamine Sulfate – This combo is necessary for tendon, ligament, bone, cartilage, and synovial (joint) fluid formation.

Quercetin – This helps with inflammation reduction.

Type II Collagen – Use this for growth and repair of joints, articular cartilage and connective tissue.

OTHER FACTORS

There are many factors to consider with regards to arthritic diets and nutritional healing, and each factor may not apply to each individual. For example, certain people are allergic to specific foods, and these allergies can indeed worsen arthritic conditions.

Ingesting foods that contain sodium nitrate or tartrazine can inflame rheumatoid arthritis, while ingesting foods containing a substance called hydrazine can contribute to *systemic lupus erythematosus*, an arthritic condition connected to lupus. There is a rare type of arthritis called *Behcet's Disease*, and eating black walnuts can cause flare-ups in people with this rare condition. So as you see, there is a variety of arthritic conditions and along with them a variety of foods that may trigger them. The best way to approach the situation is to examine each arthritic condition and tailor one's approach based upon the specifics.

The term arthritis covers over 100 different diseases and conditions. Since it would be impossible to cover all of them in a work such as this, we will look at the most common conditions: rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, and gout.

There is a prevalence of rheumatoid arthritis sufferers that have an abnormally low blood zinc level. Several independent studies have been conducted where rheumatoid arthritis patients have been given increased doses of zinc and showed marginal improvement, yet the tests were not extensive enough to be conclusive. The effects of copper on rheumatoid arthritis have been studied for a long time, and although results vary there seems to be some case for using copper to improve the condition, although this therapy has been dismissed by most of the medical profession as relatively ineffective. Copper therapy is not discouraged however when approached from food sources, and may work on some individuals. It is suggested that if you do attempt copper therapy, that copper-rich foods are utilized instead of copper supplements, because copper supplements can cause side effects which include change in sense of taste and smell, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, abnormal blood clots, increased joint pain, chills,

anemia and kidney problems, and excess copper can cause cirrhosis of the liver in patients prone to *Wilson's Disease*. Check with your doctor to be sure you are not prone to storing excess copper in your body. There is an extensive choice of foods you can enjoy in order to increase your copper intake: lamb; pork; pheasant quail; duck; goose; squid; salmon; organ meats including liver, heart, kidney, brain; shellfish including oysters, scallops, shrimp, lobster, clams, and crab; meat gelatin; soy protein meat substitutes; tofu; nuts and seeds; chocolate milk; soy milk; cocoa are just a few of the foods that are rich in copper.

As for foods to avoid when suffering with rheumatoid arthritis, many nutritionists and naturopaths suggest avoiding dairy products all together, as they seem to exacerbate rheumatoid arthritis flare-ups. Because of the risk in overdosing, one should be discouraged from taking doses of vitamins that are higher than recommended without a physician's direction. Some vitamins and minerals can actually worsen certain conditions, and the concentration that can be attained through vitamins can be dangerous. It is much better to approach any desired increase in vitamin or mineral intake through food therapy.

There has been some success with the food supplements glucosamine and chondroitin in relieving symptoms of pain and stiffness for some persons with osteoarthritis. These supplements can be found in pharmacies and health food stores, however the purity of the products or the dose of the active ingredients cannot be specified because the FDA does not monitor these supplements. The National Institutes of Health is studying glucosamine and chondroitin, so more should be known about the effectiveness of these products for osteoarthritis in the near future. Patients with

osteoarthritis taking blood-thinners should be careful taking chondroitin as it can increase the blood-thinning and cause excessive bleeding. Fish oil supplements have been shown to have some anti-inflammation properties and increasing the dietary fish intake and/or fish oil capsules (omega 3 capsules) can sometimes reduce inflammation of arthritis. With osteoarthritis there is also the concern with deterioration of cartilage; therefore those with osteoarthritis should avoid large doses of Vitamin-A, since there is some evidence that it contributes to cartilage deterioration.

In the case of fibromyalgia, although clinical proof is once again sparse, there is a great deal of personal experiences of improvement of this condition when certain dietary practices are followed. Eliminating wheat, dairy, citrus, sugar, Aspartame, alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco seem to be universal in those that have had success with treating the illness through dietary means. According to Dr. Joseph Mercola, author of “The Total Health Program,” nine of ten sufferers of fibromyalgia are female, and 76% of those who followed suggested dietary rules experienced a significant reduction in pain. The thing to keep in mind with fibromyalgia is that, unlike the other common arthritis ailments, it is more of a syndrome than a disease, and much of it can be reversed. Making corrections to diet as well as reducing stress and getting plenty of rest can lead to a full recovery.

HERBAL & OTHER NATURAL & HOME REMEDIES & SUPPLEMENTS

For people who suffer from arthritis, dependable pain relief is a vital concern. The agonizing sensations of simply walking up the stairs are discouraging and can drive patients into depression. When someone cannot function properly, their body is not in balance and often; they will become victims of their pain, forcing them to seek alternatives. These people have often tried traditional medications without success, they

are often not eligible for surgery and as a result, they will see relief through natural remedies.

Many people are also seeking natural remedies because of the increasing cost of prescription medication. Before discontinuing a prescription medication, consult a physician. However, with a doctor's approval, there are many natural solutions, which may aid in managing arthritis.

A popular alternative to medication for pain relief is acupuncture. Although the pain-relieving effects may be temporary, these sessions can be very beneficial for those who find that drugs or supplements are insufficient or have unacceptable side effects.

Cayenne Cream - apply the cayenne cream to painful areas. Cayenne peppers contain a substance called capsaicin which is responsible for their spicy effect. This also causes a burning sensation when it comes in contact with skin, and inhibits the body's production of substance P which is heavily involved in relaying signals of pain to the brain. Apply the cream two to three times per day for at least one week before making a decision as to whether or not the cream is helping to reduce arthritis pain.

It's understandable that many people experiencing pain and aching in a joint because of osteoarthritis reach for the aspirin or another conventional pain reliever. The problem is, these medications can be rough on your stomach, and they do nothing to slow the progress of your arthritis. Even the new COX-2 inhibitor drugs do not act to preserve the joint. [From the doctors of WholeHealthMD].

On the contrary, many natural remedies and supplements have been found to actually reduce cartilage deterioration and even rebuild a patient's *lost* cartilage. However, before adding any to your daily routine, check with your healthcare advisor, as

supplements can cause adverse reactions and may not be right for your situation. Note that dietary supplements are not regulated by the FDA (Food and Drug Administration); i.e. do not need to be approved by them, and can include any of the following: plants, fats, proteins and animal organs and tissues as well as herbs, minerals and vitamins. So some supplements may be fine for arthritic patients; however some may not be. Note also that manufacturers may very well promote that their products work great, but they do not have to use standardized ingredients or recipes, disclose side effects that have been reported, nor prove that the products are indeed effective. Since supplements are not FDA approved they must be accompanied by a two-part disclaimer on the product label: that the statement has not been evaluated by FDA and that the product is not intended to "diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease." So use caution.

The most popular dietary supplements for arthritis sufferers are chondroitin, fish oil and glucosamine. Chondroitin can draw fluid into the cartilage, improving shock-absorbing ability and weight control, as more weight equals more joint pressure. Fish oils help with controlling inflammation in the body. And recent studies have shown that the cartilage-building substance called glucosamine is effective for the long-term relief of osteoarthritis pain. In some people, glucosamine appears to even slow the deterioration of joints over time and reinforce joint cartilage. Whether or not it can actually reverse the disease is still unclear. In some instances, glucosamine can be used in conjunction with MSM, a substance that appears to slow down the degeneration but is not yet proven and approved.

In a nutshell:

- Chondroitin - Helps draw fluid into cartilage, improving shock-absorbing ability.

- Ginger – Ginger is an antioxidant that acts as an inflammatory with no major side effects.
- Glucosamine sulfate – This builds cartilage with very few side effects.
- Magnets – Although magnets that are worn as jewelry or placed on bed linens have been reported by some to be effective pain relievers, results are still preliminary; doctors claim that these magnets are not strong enough.
- MSM - This organic sulfur is used in the reduction of inflammation.
- Nettle leaf - Nettles can reduce a patient's need for NSAIDS (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) by up to 70 percent.
- Vitamin E – This antioxidant is used primarily for osteoarthritis.
- Vitamin B is also an effective pain reliever. It works best on the knee and can help stop degeneration that is caused by free-radical molecules, not only in the joints but in other areas of the body as well

These are merely a few examples of what an arthritis sufferer can use when seeking pain relief from natural remedies. However, due to the lack of scientific study and testing on many of these alternate treatments, there is no proof of their effectiveness.

Nothing can cure osteoarthritis, but nutritional supplements, the application of heat or cold to affected joints, exercise, and weight loss can improve the function and flexibility of your joints, and perhaps even slow the progress of the disease. Conventional over-the-counter pain relievers, such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen, can be very helpful in decreasing joint pain, but they do produce side effects and can cause problems in long-term users.

Unfortunately, there is no way to cure arthritis. However, you can delay the onset

by maintaining a healthy weight. Exercise regularly and eat a healthy and avoid repetitious movements that cause you pain.

EXERCISES FOR ALL LEVELS

Exercise can be very beneficial for arthritis sufferers, often relieving stiffness in joints, strengthening muscles thereby reducing stress on joints, keeping bone and cartilage tissue strong and healthy, and increasing flexibility. A recommended 30-minute minimum of daily activity is the norm. Before starting any exercise program, it is vital that one speak to their doctor to ensure there are no unseen risks, however you will find that most doctors recommend exercise for their arthritis patients either on their own initiative or when asked.

The types of exercises suggested vary; however, with all types of exercise the warm-up is the starting point. Warming up is best started with applying warm compresses to the joints, followed by mild stretching. Range of motion exercises, such as dance, are a very good start, as are low-impact aerobics. These can relieve stiffness and increase flexibility. Never discount the effectiveness of walking as an exercise. Walking is a great exercise to improve the arthritic condition, and carrying weights as light as one pound and using your arms as you walk can involve the whole body. The “trick” is to make walking interesting enough as an exercise to stay motivated. Try walking in different settings, alternating walking with dance on different days, and of course including a partner can be much more interesting than going at it alone.

Using aquatics: exercising in a pool-is a great way to exercise as well. Water is an excellent aid because it provides resistance that builds muscle in the entire body while reducing shock to the joints at the same time. Additionally, because the whole body tends

to become involved in aquatic exercise the added benefit of cardiovascular exercise is enjoyed. If at all possible, find a heated pool to work out in. Warm water is soothing to the joints and will cause the blood vessels to dilate, increasing circulation. With that in mind, it is often beneficial to add using a spa to your regimen, perhaps after your workout, in order to provide some soothing jets of water to your muscles and even more help with increased circulation, which is always vital when dealing with arthritis.

If you still want more variety, you may want to try yoga. Yoga is a general term for several stretching, and pose-oriented exercises originating in India, and is extremely beneficial toward achieving flexibility and reducing stress physically and mentally. There are gentle forms of yoga such as Hatha Yoga that are excellent to start with. Hatha Yoga comprises of gentle stretches and simple poses that help flexibility and balance, and are easy to learn and enjoy. Check your local activities paper or section of your local paper to see if there are any yoga classes near you.

Even when you cannot make it out to walk or to an aquatics or yoga class, there are exercises you can do daily to improve flexibility, strength and conditioning. You can flex your legs while sitting in a chair facing forward, simply by moving your leg outward while keeping your foot on the floor and holding it there for a few seconds, then retracting it until your foot is behind you, then alternating to the other leg. Interlocking your fingers and slowly flexing your wrists to the left and the right for a few minutes a day can help tremendously to increase flexibility and reduce pain in the wrist area.

For your upper back, you can stand upright in front of a table, then lean over and place your hands on the table and tuck your chin back toward your collarbone. Once positioned as such, lift your upper back upward and simultaneously take a deep breath.

Hold that position for 5-10 seconds and then relax while exhaling. While doing this, lower your spine slowly as you move both shoulder blades forward as if toward each other. Repeat this exercise for 10-15 repetitions.

For the shoulders and middle back, start again from an upright position standing as straight as you can, reach back and lock the fingers of both hands together. Breathe slowly and deeply and lift upward with your shoulders while at the same time, exhaling. Be sure to keep your chest up and your chin in. Repeat this for about 10-15 sets.

For the shoulders and upper chest, choose a free corner of the room to stand in and place your hands on the opposite sides of the corner. Take a step back about 18 inches from the corner. You now should be facing the corner directly with your hands on both of the walls with your body some distance from the wall itself. Keeping your chest up after inhaling, lean in toward the corner while exhaling. Repeat this exercise for 10-15 sets.

Whatever exercise program you choose, be sure to breathe properly when exercising. Oxygenation is important to any exercise regimen as it promotes a healthy heart rate and reduces fatigue; additionally oxygenation helps circulation, which is vital to achieving the flexibility and strength that you are trying to achieve in battling arthritis. Also, listen to your body. It is natural to feel a little fatigue and soreness when starting a new exercise regimen, However if the pain of soreness persists for more than one hour, or you have a decrease in mobility that lasts longer than an hour, then the regimen should be reduced until the soreness desists. Also, look for signs of increased swelling of joints or any persistent increase of weakness; these are signs of activities that are too strenuous and a reduction in activity will be necessary. Just remember to take all new exercise

regimens slowly at the start. The idea is to increase flexibility not train for the Olympics.

There are three main types of exercises to include in a basic exercise program:

Range-of-motion exercises - These lessen stiffness and help with improving flexibility.

"Range of motion" refers to the area within which the joints move naturally or on a daily basis. Although these range-of-motion exercises can be performed every day, it is recommended that they be done at least every other day.

Strengthening exercises – There are two types of strengthening exercises; isometric or tightening the muscles without moving the joints, and isotonic, moving of the joints for strengthening muscle movements. It is recommended to do these sets of exercises every other day, unless you are suffering from more than mild joint pain or swelling.

Endurance exercises – The objective of these is to increase stamina. They also help with improving your inner personal / mental strength and with improving weight control and sleep. Some of the most popular endurance exercises are stationary bike riding, walking and water exercising. And unless you are suffering from more than mild joint pain or swelling, a 20- to 30-minute workout or two to three short 10-minute bouts during the day is what is recommended, an average of three times each week. Be kind to your body, and it will be kind to you.

Let's sum up exercise with a few tips for all:

- Establish your own unique, exercise program so that it meets your personal health needs, budget and environment. Make sure it is safe by checking with your own professional healthcare advisor and workout trainer. And take it slow and steady like Aesop's turtle in the race.
- Be kind to yourself. Stop if something hurts. And experiment with applying heat before

exercising and warming up. Then cool off afterwards with cold packs.

-Enjoy exercising by making it a real part of your life during the week. Include range-of-motion, strengthening and endurance exercises in your routines. And vary your activities; try a new class at a health club one quarter. Next time, go elsewhere or join a naturalist group for weekly hikes in local parks. Keep an active folder with pockets of gyms and health clubs near you with their schedules and up-dated classes and coupon specials. And check newspapers, local bulletin boards, postings at the gyms and clubs, etc. for healthy activities like walk-a-thons and bike-a-thons for nonprofits and evening / weekend hikes in which you can participate. You'll meet new friends, have fun, get out more and exercise all at the same time.

- Exercise activities are available all around you, too. No need to spend time and money elsewhere. You can borrow exercise videos, cassettes, DVDs and books from public libraries. You can get active by washing windows, cleaning your house, car, pet, children's closets, your closets, anything... You can even earn money doing activities like walking and distributing flyers, local newspapers and coupons (check with companies who place these in and around your mailbox and door - -they often need help).

MEDICATIONS& OTCS (OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDS)

There are many over-the-counter (OTC) pain medications for arthritis pain sufferers that can be purchased without physicians' prescriptions. Some are nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) – some are OTCs / some require a prescription, acetaminophen and various topical medications, covered in the very next section. Users need to be aware of possible risk from long term use or product abuse, though, and consult their medical advisors before and during use.

The most common OTC NSAIDs are ibuprofen, naproxen and aspirin. However, the misuse of some of these can cause blockage of an enzyme in the body that aids in the protection of the stomach lining and other areas. Misuse can lead to stomach ulcers and bleeding, and liver and kidney trouble. (The same drug abuse issues can result from prescription NSAIDs, too). Use the right way, these drugs can help with pain relief, inflammation and fever reduction, and blood clot prevention.

Acetaminophen is the name of the active ingredient found in several well-known brand-name products; some Excedrin® products, Tylenol®, and Aspirin Free Anacin®. Although it does not help with arthritic inflammation and swelling, it can help with pain relief in mild cases. Use caution with dosages, however. Excess usage poses risk of liver damage, even death, especially for active drinkers (of alcoholic beverages).

Topical Painkillers

If your arthritis pain is mild and only affects on or two joints, you may find that a topical pain reliever or topical analgesic can be useful. Topical painkillers are available as creams, salves or gels. The active ingredients of topical painkillers include: Capsaicin. Found naturally in hot peppers, capsaicin is found in drug stores under the brand names of Capzasin-P, Zostrix, and other drugs. Capsaicin works by blocking the transmission of a pain-relaying substance called substance P to the brain.

Camphor, eucalyptus oil and menthol are found in a variety of agents such as *Arthricare*, *Eucalyptamint* and *Icy Hot* amongst others. These substances are able to relieve pain by tricking the body to feel the coolness or heat of these agents.

Salicylates is a substance available in *Aspercreme*, *BenGay*, and *Flexall*. Salicylates work by decreasing pain and inflammation

RELAXATION & COPING TIPS

The importance of relaxation in controlling and treating disease in general has only recently been recognized throughout the medical industry, yet its implementation still lags and the general public does still not understand its effectiveness. Relaxation techniques, especially those involving meditation, have been seen as a bunch of “mumbo jumbo” for many years, until the findings of scientists and doctors that showed immense benefits to this practice became more prevalent. Relaxation techniques have a definite place in the healing process of the body, and with arthritis the case is no different. With certain types of arthritis, the importance of relaxation is increased, since stress and emotional disposition play a large part in them.

Prayer is a form of relaxation and meditation if you are spiritually or religiously inclined that also works wonders. Either following a minister or someone else leading prayer, or formulating your own inspirational prayer, you can pull upon the comfort of God as you see him taking your pain away. Again mental and physical benefits are realized from such a practice.

You may also consider hypnosis as an option. Hypnosis is simply a guided meditation that allows you to access the power of your subconscious mind through a guide called a hypnotist, who is either a trained psychologist, psychiatrist, counselor, or social worker. Images of a man with a shiny gold stopwatch putting you under a trance to make you perform unusual acts or tell deep dark truths are more the scripts of Hollywood movies than what real-life hypnotism is. In the case of hypnosis for pain management, hypnosis is nothing more than an assisted guided imagery, such as described above. The only difference here is that you have someone to help you through the steps of relaxation

and meditation on your image.

Relaxation is especially effective for those suffering from fibromyalgia, because this condition is caused by a number of non-physical triggers. Fibromyalgia largely comes from stress, lack of proper sleep, depression, and other emotional duress, and does not involve degeneration of the bones or joints. With this in mind, it is easy to see why relaxation techniques help alleviate this condition so well. Yoga is very beneficial both for flexibility as well as relaxation. Forms of yoga such as Bhakta are devotional, and Raja is meditation-oriented. They can provide a great deal of healing toward all types of arthritis, but specifically fibromyalgia because of the emotional causes.

SURGICAL SOLUTIONS

Although medications are the first defense against arthritis pain and swelling, if they fail to solve the problem, many doctors will suggest a surgical measure. Whenever someone is considering a surgical procedure, he or she should consult a physician for expressing concerns and gathering information. During this time, he or she should discuss all of the any potential risks involved with the procedure as well as all of the alternative measures. However, a decision is made to continue with the surgery, the doctor will recommend a procedure that he feels is best suited for the patient's condition and then will explain what that procedure entails. Note that sometimes before surgery, doctors prescribe blood-thinning medication and advise you to do various joint movement activities or exercises in order to increase circulation.

Some benefits of going the surgery route can include the stabilization, improved alignment or replacement of a joint so that you can have greater mobility, flexibility, overall use and range-of-motion. Surgery may also be able to provide some level of pain

relief where other treatment options might have failed.

Be aware there are possible risks with surgery, though, like blood clots resulting. And your healthcare specialist may advise against surgery if, for example, you have existing health problems that could pose possible unwanted risks. Some of these problems could include sickness or infections that would need to be healed first, being over weight, which could cause more stress and delayed recovery, lung problems or heart disease.

Common types of surgery used in the treatment of arthritis follow:

Arthrodesis – This is the joining together or fusion of joint bones. Arthrodesis helps stop the progression of the disease at the point of fusion, ending the pain. Loss of the joint's flexibility can result. However, the area will be better able to handle weight and offer general movement. In other words, the joint may not be 360-degree-flexible any longer, but there will be some lesser-degree of flexibility overall without pain.

Arthroplasty – This is the replacement or rebuilding of an entire joint. And it is intended for those with high-level pain and movement impairment. It is discussed in much more detail in the section immediately following this one, offering a focus with regards to hip replacement.

Arthroscopy – Growing more popular with the improved use of technology, this procedure is when specialized instruments are inserted into the joint by means of tiny incisions. During this surgery, the operating physician has helping staff members who aid the computerized monitoring and some handling of the instruments. The doctor can see the joint on closed-circuit television and make repairs to it, while talking through a microphone. Then not only are there physical results, but the patient has a video with

audio record of the entire occurrence for insurance and other records. Arthroscopy is often performed on an outpatient basis. And recovery time is generally much less than with other “open” surgery.

Osteotomy - This is a medical procedure that makes an actual cut in the bone, most generally to correct youth deformities like in the knee or hip. Osteotomy helps with re-alignment, stabilization, pain relief and the delaying of joint replacement alternatives for up to 10 years.

Synovectomy – This procedure, generally done via arthroscopy, involves the removal of diseased joint tissue lining or synovium. Results can include swelling decrease, pain relief, improved but not completely healed joint health.

Procedures for Joint Replacement Surgery (Hip)

There are currently many options in orthopedic (bone) surgery for people with arthritis. Joint replacement is the most common option. According to the National Joint Replacement Foundation, (NJRF) over 435,000 Americans underwent this procedure last year. These numbers have boosted joint replacement to one of the most successful medical discoveries and the absolute most significant surgery in the field of arthritis treatment.

Joint replacement is the process of removing one’s entire joint as well as any damaged tissue and replacing it with a metal prosthesis. This prosthesis provides the patient with much need relief from pain. This surgery most effective on the weight bearing joints such as the knees, hips, and ankles, however, it has been used for all joints with successful results.

Hip replacement surgery consists of removing the entire hip joint and replacing it

with artificial components. These components function in the same manner as the natural hip, with the same type of motion. When a patient elects to undergo hip replacement surgery, they have an option to use their own blood. There is a great loss of blood during the procedure, and patients are prepared for this ahead of time. They can elect to have their own blood taken and stored ahead of time so that when they need a transfusion, they can use blood from their own body, eliminating many of the risks associated with transfusions.

This particular procedure begins with an initial incision. The surgeon will then proceed to remove the entire hip joint, including the ball, socket, and top of the femur. Once the joint, and all damaged tissue is removed, a metal cup is adhered to the pelvic bone. Then, a metal stem is inserted into the femur; leaving a portion exposed at the end for several inches. The doctors place a ball on the end of the exposed portion of the metal rod, and all of the exposed parts are lined with another antifriction material. The hip is reassembled, placing the ball joint into the socket and the incision is then closed. Fusion Arthrodesis, or bone fusion, is another optional procedure where the bones are fused together in order to prevent them from moving independently. This can be done two ways:

1. Bone Grafting is the method of stimulating fusion between two bones by placing a small piece of bone, from another region of the body, in between. This small piece of bone encourages growth for the surrounding bones, thus fusing them in place.
2. Implantation of a metal or ceramic piece, which is adhered to each of the two bones, using either screws or a special glue, thus preventing movement of the bones. Fusion is a common procedure and is used in conjunction with joint replacement surgery, which is

more extreme of a procedure than bone fusion alone.

During a procedure called Arthroscopy, doctors can evaluate the injured tissue and eliminate any loose material with the use of instruments that are inserted into the joint through little incisions in the skin. During the procedure, the surgeon can observe any damage to the joint on a closed-circuit television, and further remove any loose growths that could be the origin of pain. This sort of surgery can often be executed on an outpatient basis, and typically involves a shorter recovery stage than open/inpatient surgery.

Rehabilitation times for joint replacement surgery vary from one person to the next. However, the average person has been shown to regain most functions within three weeks. A positive attitude can help to facilitate recovery. It is important for patients to participate in this by reassuring themselves as well as seeking support from support groups, family, and friends.

Regardless of the type of surgery recommended, most people recommend getting at least one other opinion before proceeding. In addition, check out books, conduct your own online research, ask questions through health chat rooms, call your own local providers and learn all you can about your health condition. And if you do decide upon surgery, look and plan ahead, too. Will you need time off work? Someone to help around the house? Someone to run errands? Line up help with neighbors, friends, church members, family, co-workers and local services to pick up groceries, bring in the mail, clean house and basically keep things running in the interim. In short, take charge and reach out.

ARTHRITIC PREVENTION & SELF CARE

To help with the prevention and relief of arthritis, prescribe a proactive plan for yourself. Take charge of your lifestyle and see where improvements can be made, like with regards to any of the following, listed in no particular order of importance or affect.

Acupuncture / Acupressure - Acupuncture or therapeutic "needle piercing" is the insertion of fine needles into the skin in order to stimulate targeted places in the body, referred to as acupoints. Along with the needles, the acupuncture practitioner also generally applies any of the following to stimulate the points; suction, friction, heat, pressure or electromagnetic energy impulses. The treatment goal is to stimulate the acupoints in order to balance the body's movement of energy (qi) and restore health. Ask your healthcare provider for practitioner referrals or look in directories under holistic services.

Acupressure, also referred to as Relief with Fingertips, is similar to acupuncture, but uses the hands for healing technique instead of needles and other devices. Depending upon the afflicted area and type of arthritic condition, a combination of knuckles, fingers, thumbs and palm massage techniques are use in the surrounding areas. Note that traditional Chinese described four types of arthritic conditions that work alone or in combinations; wind, cold, heat and damp:

Wind – Presents itself in the body with moving aches and pains that are worsened by the wind.

Cold – Presents itself with swollen and painful joints sensitive to fog, rain and high humidity conditions.

Heat – Presents itself in areas reddish in color and inflamed; may feel hot when touched.

Damp – Presents itself with aches during colder, decreasing temperatures and storms, i.e.

extreme weather changes.

Consult your healthcare provider for practitioner referrals or look in directories under holistic services for charts and more information.

Aromatherapy – Aromatherapy or "treatment using scents," is another holistic treatment used by some arthritic sufferers for pain relief, skincare and revival, rejuvenation and stress management. Treatment focuses on using pleasurable aromatic botanical oils by either massaging them into the skin, adding them to the bath water, inhaling them directly or diffusing their scents into the surrounding environment. The oils have been known to affect moods, help with relaxation, lessen or end fatigue and anxiety, and help the brain and nervous system via olfactory nerves stimulation when inhaled.

Aromatherapy is reportedly one of the fastest growing fields in alternative medicine, used in home, clinical and hospital environments for pain and stress relief.

Aromatherapy treatments for arthritis vary and essential oils used can include:

- Cinnamomum Camphora (Camphor)
- Cupressus Sempervirens (Cypress)
- Eucalyptus
- Ginger
- Hhyssopus Officinalis (Hyssop)
- Juniperus Communis (Juniper)
- Lavandula Officinalis (Lavender)
- Matricaria Chamomilla (Chamomile)
- Rosmarinus Officinalis (Rosemary)
- Styrax Benzoin (Benzoin)

Recipe for Arthritis Aromatherapy:

Add six drops each of rosemary and chamomile oils to four ounces of a base oil like almond, avocado, sesame or soybean. Massage oil into sore arthritic joints. For added pain relief, relax for about 10 minutes in a warm tub of water in which ten drops each of rosemary and chamomile oils are added.

Other Aromatherapy Oil Applications:

- Mix oil with hot water and inhale the vapor that rises from the bowl.
- Add the oil in with a base oil and massage arthritic areas.
- Lightly dab and wear as a cologne or perfume
- Add to bath water
-

Dietary & Exercise Planning – Consult your healthcare provider for guidelines, recipes and menus to help establish a tailor-made diet and exercise plan. If there are other family members with you, make sure to include them in your plans so that there is less stress regarding food decision-making at mealtime. Ask about any vitamins and other supplementary items as well.

Activity – Plan regular physical activity on a daily basis. This is for the rest of your life, too, not just to lose 10 lbs, then stop. So plan accordingly, keeping in mind your monthly budget, seasonal weather changes, any equipment and attire needs, etc. Planning ahead avoids the stress of the unexpected; for example, on rainy days when you can't go jogging or walking. Instead, with advanced preparation, you can simply pop in an exercise video or cassette, borrowed from the public library for that month. Keep a journal and note your progress and see which type activities you like best, which make you feel better and which help you with your overall health plans that may include weight loss or maintenance, and just getting out for some fresh air and sunshine.

Heat / Cold – Alternate with hot and cold packs to help with any pain and stiffness that tries to pop up. (When alternating, allow body temperature to return to normal before switching pack treatments.) And nice hot showers or baths in the morning go a long way in helping loosen up those morning muscles and joints.

Pain Relievers - Check with your healthcare provider for any over-the-counter and prescription pain relief medications and ointments that may be available to you. Then have supplies on hand. Search online for discounted rates, coupons and specials. Better

an ounce of prevention than... running to the store while suffering painful joint problems on a cold, snowy morning for some Tylenol.

Ultrasounds – Check into the possibility of having an ultrasound via your healthcare provider or a physical therapist. An ultrasound is a recommended method of helping with pain reduction in an easy, painless manner. Sound waves are sent or generated into the area joint region in pain.

TENS Treatment - Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation or TENS for short, is another pain-free alternative to pain relief. In a nutshell, light electrical pulses travel via a tiny TENS unit or device, resulting in a vibrating or tapping sensation, to nerves in the painful joint area. Ask your healthcare provider for more information.

Fashion – Forget about focusing on fashion and leaving safety behind. Instead opt for comfortable shoes like a tennis shoe that offers good support. Focus on comfort; so that you can move your toes around a little; rubber soles to help from slips and falls; and low heels to prevent undue stress on knees.

Journal – Keep a journal. Don't be afraid of misspelling words or lousy handwriting. Just be free to jot down your feelings, progress, thoughts, good days and bad. Add stickers and use colored markers or pencils to be more creative. And note any questions you may have, maybe list them at the end of the journal, so that you can take the journal along on medical appointments and ask your healthcare provider.

Safety – Don't worry what others think or say here. If you need and can have safety bars installed and other safety equipment in your home, bathroom areas especially, good for you. Focal points include: safety bars for tub and shower areas, stairways (indoor and out), walkways / driveways that ice up during wintertime and any swimming areas.

Network – Team up with a fellow arthritis sufferer or two and meet for walks, chat breaks and fun. Cyber-buddies are great, too. With your favorite search engine, surf for arthritis forums and reach out to meet new people, find new resources to share and more.

Get up and Garden – Multiple rewards here! You enjoy this fun outdoor activity and benefit from healthy sunshine and exercise. You'll harvest plant, fruit and /or vegetable crops to enjoy, share, sell for extra income, donate and leave for local wildlife.

Take Breaks – Especially if your job involves a lot of sitting, get up and stretch your legs every 30 minutes or so. Shake out the stiffness.

Wrist Aids – If you're at a keyboard all day, check out the latest wrist rests for your keyboard.

Massage – Treat yourself to a massage to relief painful stress. Arthritic patients have found that massage therapy and gentle stretching helps to relieve pain, relax muscles, reduce swelling and aid in range of motion in joints. No funds available? Check out a library book on how to give yourself a message. Here are some basic guidelines.

For osteoarthritis:

Gently massage around the painful area with a little vegetable oil or massage oil on your fingertips, making small, gentle circles with your fingertips. Avoid massaging directly on the joint. Instead, work right above and below it with your fingertips. Repeat daily for three to five minutes each time.

For rheumatoid arthritis:

Apply oil or cream to your fingers and use a rhythmic or effleurage massage on the muscle and tissue around the afflicted joint. Repeat daily for five to 10 minutes each time.

Yoga – Yoga has helped arthritic patients with improving confidence, mood, self-awareness, range of motion, relaxation, blood circulation, concentration, stress and pain reduction, health of bones, tendons, muscles and joint ligaments. Classes and instruction are often offered at health and fitness centers; check out public library resources, too (books, videos, audio cassettes, DVDs, etc.) Not much is required to begin: pillows and a mat, some type of blanket or carpet piece for padding and comfort. “Let’s Do Yoga,” an article by Christina DiMartino published in *Arthritis Today*, mentions six basic yoga positions that offer a wide range of benefits (don’t perform any that cause strain and remember to confirm with healthcare provider):

Mountain Pose – This position is for helping develop posture. With feet a comfortable distance apart, legs and knees straight, stand and distribute weight evenly, tightening thigh muscles. Keep pelvis in a neutral position, not arching the back, not leaning forward, and expand ribcage by opening chest and shoulders. Hold head comfortably straight with arms loosely hanging at your sides, body vertically aligned.

Child Pose – This position is for help with stretching the back and neck, and for stomach stress, for improving digestion. Begin by sitting in a chair, draping your torso over your knees. After strength and endurance build over time, gradually extend this position by sitting on bent knees with feet and toes straight behind you, and spread knees wide enough to allow the torso to fall forward between your legs. Gently release tension by inhaling and exhaling slowly, falling forward, using pillows and blankets for padding and support.

Down Dog Variation – This position is for alignment, balance upper and lower body strength and flexibility. In a standing position, with feet parallel and straight beneath the

hips, pointed forward, face a wall. Point knees straight ahead, bend them slightly and place your hands against the wall, slightly higher than your shoulders, shoulder-distance apart. Gently drop your head forward till the ears are between the elbows, while pressing with your arms and pushing back with your hips.

Cat-Cow - This position aids in stress reduction, increasing circulation and range of motion in the spine. With hands and knees shoulder-length apart, squat down on all fours. Breathe in slow, steady and deep while gently arching the back, tilting the pelvis upward, and stretching the neck and head forward. Exhale while tucking the head. Repeat, focusing on movement and breathing coordination.

Reclined Twist – This position stretches and opens the hip joints, massages the sacral area and back, and stretches the spine. In bed or on your mat or blanket, lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat. Lift hips, shifting them slightly to one side, and place knees one on top of the other, falling in the opposite direction of your hips as you inhale. Exhale, turning the head opposite the knees. Wait 30 to 60 seconds, then release. Then raise knees back to the center and stretch in the opposite direction, using other side. Tip: Beginners may want to extend one leg at a time and bend and twist the other.

Deep Back Rest – This position is to help with relaxation. Usually the final pose in yoga classes and performed in bed before sleeping, it aids in mind and body relaxation. Flat on your back with feet comfortably apart and facing out, place arms a comfortable distance from the body. Face palms whichever way are most comfortable for your wrists. And dim lighting or place something over your eyes.

Some people combine their favorite soothing music or sound tracks, like nature or ocean sounds, with the positions. And some vary lighting colors, depending upon the

season and their mental and physical health. For more techniques and information, check with additional resources from your public library and medical clinics.

Physical Therapy – Check with your healthcare provider about finding a physical therapist to help with various exercises based upon your diagnosis.

Stress Management Techniques – Regardless of arthritis, 70- to 90-percent of the general population reports being stressed, which can sure add to pain and ill health issues.

So prevention and self-care are in order. Here are many ways to deal with stress:

Assertiveness Training – For some reason, especially if others are older than you, at the mention of arthritis, people can try to minimize what you're going through, thinking they are older and you shouldn't be complaining about your "aches and pains." Well, tough. Age has nothing to do with arthritis or your pain. And others may get caught up in their own lives too much from time to time to notice, but you are important. And so is your health and your pain relief. So take charge and take care of yourself. Learn to say "no" to unhealthy activities that strain your joints. Slow down and use aids where you need to like grips in the stairways, a walking cane or athletic shoes instead of heeled dress shoes. Your health and pain relief is very important.

Coping Skills Training - Learn to cope better by improving three areas: your thinking, behavior and lifestyle. Thought-wise, start thinking more about the positives instead of negatives. For example, there are many more treatment options available today for arthritis. And that's a very positive ideology to focus on. For help with more, check our positive thinking inspirational nonfiction from the library. And be a volunteer for those less fortunate than you are to get a different perspective on life.

Behavior-wise, get more organized. Allow time to plan, shop for and prepare your

meals and menus. Allow time for activities, exercises and other self-care necessities. Use a planner or notebook and pencil to jot down daily goals and things to do so that they get done. And do allow time for venting and sharing your frustrations with a close friend.

Work in humor whenever possible to lighten the load and make life more enjoyable. And Plan fun things into your life; trips, hikes, etc. And lifestyle-wise, shuffle some of these into your routine:

- Pet Therapy - get a animal companion
- Meditation - take a time out
- Deep Breathing - stand and focus on your feet pressing the floor, grounding you
- Pace - go at it for awhile back and forth
- Leisure - read a good book, hum, just do nothing...
- Rest – sleep or take a quick nap or just rest
- Nature – Take a hike, stop and smell the roses
- Hydrotherapy: Enjoy a soothing, warm or hot bath with your favorite bubbles or oil(s) added. Dim the lights, light a candle, play soft music....
- Music Therapy – Enjoy soothing tunes in your favorite lounge chair, on the porch, in the bath, resting in bed.

Organizations – Turn to worldwide, federal, state and local associations to stay informed about arthritis. Get on their mailing lists and stay tuned to the latest information about new treatments, drug therapies, OTC medication, surgeries and other pain relief and prevention solutions. Keep their information handy in a file cabinet and online in your computer for quick, handy reference in times of pain and stress. Here are some places to begin gathering information from:

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS)

<http://www.aaos.org>

6300 North River Road Rosemont

Illinois 60018-4262

Phone (847) 823-7186 or (800) 346-AAOS

Fax (847) 823-8125

The AAOS offers educational and facility management services for orthopedic surgeons and allied health professionals. This organization, with over 16,000 members, also serves as an advocate for improved patient care. And they educate the general public about orthopedic science. Check out their “Public Education” area online for public service

announcements, educational and other opportunities.

American College of Rheumatology (ACR)

<http://www.rheumatology.org>

1800 Century Place, Suite 250

Atlanta, GA 30345-4300

Phone: (404) 633-3777

Fax: (404) 633-1870

ACR is the professional organization of rheumatologists and associated health professionals; including psychologists, practicing physicians, nurses, research scientists, physical and occupational therapists and social workers. They focus on healing, preventing disability and curing over 100 types of arthritis and related disabling, sometimes fatal, disorders of the bones, muscles and joints. Visit their Patients and Public section online for educational, assistance and other information and articles.

American Pain Foundation

<http://www.painfoundation.org/default.asp>

201 N. Charles Street, Suite 710

Baltimore, Maryland 21201-4111

Toll-Free: 1-888-615-PAIN (7246)

The American Pain Foundation is a nonprofit information resource and patient advocacy group. They help people with pain. Their mission is to improve the quality of life of people with pain by providing practical information for patients, raising public awareness and understanding of pain, and advocating against barriers to effective treatment. Subscribe to their print and online newsletters; back issues are archived online. And check out their online resource library with a specific section on arthritis and their free online Pain Action Guide.

Arthritis Foundation

<http://www.arthritis.org>

P.O. Box 7669

Atlanta, GA 30357-0669

(800) 283-7800

The Arthritis Foundation works to improve lives through leadership in the prevention, control and cure of arthritis and related diseases. They supports the more than 100 types of arthritis and related conditions with advocacy, programs, services and research. And they provide large number of community-based services including: grant opportunities, self-help courses, water and land-based exercise classes, support and home study groups, instructional videotapes, public forums, free educational brochures and booklets, a national, bimonthly consumer magazine *Arthritis Today*, and continuing education courses and publications for health professionals. Join in their online communities, learn about upcoming events and programs and more.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Arthritis Division

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/arthritis/index.htm>

1600 Clifton Rd, Atlanta, GA 30333, U.S.A

Tel: (404) 639-3311 / Public Inquiries: (404) 639-3534 / (800) 311-3435

The organization mentions lists arthritis in “The Nation's Leading Cause of Disability” section. Check out their health communications, state-funded programs and research. Check out their most recent statistics on arthritis. Sign up for their free email alerts in English or Spanish.

Hospital for Special Surgery &

Division of Rheumatology, Hospital for Special Surgery

<http://www.hss.edu>

<http://rheumatology.hss.edu>

Hospital for Special Surgery

535 East 70th Street

New York, NY 10021

Phone: (212) 606-1000

The Hospital for Special Surgery specializes in orthopedics, rheumatology, and rehabilitation in the United States. The Division of Rheumatology of The Hospital for Special Surgery features patient care, clinical training research methodology and community programs to educate and assist patients. They are specialists in joint replacement and share up-to-date medical musculoskeletal information to patients, physicians and caregivers. Check out their online listing of Conditions and Treatments in alphabetical order, in text, video and audio files, all available at the click of your mouse.

Johns Hopkins Arthritis Center

<http://www.hopkins-arthritis.org>

Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center

5501 Hopkins Bayview Circle

Baltimore, Maryland 21224

Phone: (410) 550-2400

FAX: (410) 550-5601

The Johns Hopkins Arthritis Center provides a easy-to-navigate, top-quality, interactive, educational site about arthritis, focusing mainly on rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. Click and Ask the Expert questions, communicate on their message board, head to the drug corner for the latest Drug Information Sheets, and more.

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)

<http://www.nih.gov/niams>

National Institutes of Health

1 AMS Circle

Bethesda, MD 20892-3675

Phone: (301) 495-4484 or (877) 22-NIAMS (226-4267) (free of charge)

TTY: (301) 565-2966 / Fax: (301) 718-6366

This group is a clearinghouse for information about forms of arthritis and rheumatic disease and bone, muscle and skin diseases. They distribute patient and professional education materials and refer people to other sources of information. Get help in English

or Spanish about arthritis health topics, patient studies, outreach programs, their coalition members, press releases, upcoming events and publications.

Arthritis Pain Relief and Prevention Plan

A great place to begin taking charge of you arthritis pain relief and prevention planning is by making an appointment with your healthcare provider and finding out more about your condition and treatment options. Make sure to jot down questions ahead of time, and take them along in your journal or notebook, armed with a pencil to fill in his or her replies. Some questions to begin with may be centered around these:

1. Do I have a form of arthritis? If not, what is wrong & what do I do next?
2. If so, which type is it? And what can I expect short-term and long-term?
3. What pain relief treatments are available? Which have side affects & what are they?
4. What self-care solutions do you advise?
5. Are there any limitations I should know about; i.e. special dietary issues, special activities to avoid, any OTC meds to NOT mix, etc.?
6. What resources do you have to help with my diet and exercise planning?
7. What other arthritic and other health resources do you have for my family and me?

When you take in your questions, also take in a description of your symptoms so that your doctor can help better understand your situation and health. Make sure to note:

- Where you have pain (same joint both limbs?)
- When you feel pain – with certain activities, in the morning, when it rains, etc.
- How long you have had the pain
- If the pain increases or decreases, comes and goes, etc.

- The type & intensity level of pain – stabbing, dull, cramping, stiffness...and low, mild or high pain
- Note any limitations – can't bend over too far without pain, can't get out of car, etc.
- Share any family history of arthritis
- Tell about any OTC or prescription medications or other treatments you currently take or use.
- Discuss any special diet you are on and exercise programs

So try the different options available for arthritis pain relief and prevention. Give your joints a break as soon as possible from any excess weight they're hauling around, even if it's the weight of excess stress. And lighten up and make pain relief and prevention care part of your normal, everyday routine.