

SELF-HELP FOR ARTHRITIS

I have found through experience that the following factors are the most important in self-help for arthritis:

1. Cleansing the body of toxins.
2. Diet. This makes all the difference to your condition.
3. Supplements. Some of these are invaluable.
4. Fresh air. This also covers Breathing. How you breathe is really important.
5. Relaxation. This combats stress which aggravates pain of all kinds, not only physical.
6. Exercise. "Use it or lose it."

To elaborate:

1. Toxins and constipation cause pain and stiffness. Keeping things moving internally is especially important in arthritis. We all carry toxins in the body, sometimes since childhood. You can get detoxifying tablets from the Arthritic Association or from Health Stores, or you can purchase Silymarin (Milk Thistle), which cleanses the liver and digestive system. You take the detox tablets one night a week before retiring then fast as long as possible the next day, preferably taking vegetable juice to keep your strength up. Then eat salads, jacket potatoes, home-made soups etc. Juice can be made on a purpose-made juice machine (you can buy a book on it).
2. Diet plays an important part in your progress. There is so much to it I would recommend that you join the Arthritic Association. They have a system of points for different foodstuffs - the ones with the highest points are likely to affect you. Of course not everyone is the same, but certain foods seem to affect most people. Some of the following basic guidelines may be helpful:
 - Cut out or reduce dairy produce. For me, cheese is 'lethal'. Soya milk or Rice Dream can be substituted for cows' milk. A little cottage cheese is usually O.K.
 - Use unrefined oil for cooking - sunflower or olive. Polyunsaturated oil is likely to make you worse, owing to free radicals, and never use it for cooking. Margarine should be unhydrogenated. I also use oil instead of butter on jacket potatoes, etc.
 - Eat as much greenstuffs as you can especially broccoli, lettuce, watercress etc. Celery also is excellent for arthritis. Organic food is preferable if you can afford it - especially carrots which pick up pesticides from the soil. Everything should be as pure and fresh as possible.
 - Eat fish rather than meat; oily fish such as herrings, salmon and sardines are especially recommended. Animal fats contain inflammatory substances. Occasional chicken is all right but make sure it is free-range.
 - Rice is excellent as it helps to 'mop up' toxins which cause pain. Wholegrain is best. Seeds (and nuts if they don't affect you) are good sources of protein, and also provide essential minerals such as zinc and selenium - antioxidants which combat free radicals. Seeds include sunflower, linseed, pumpkin and sesame, among others. Sprouted seeds are best - others contain Phytic acid which washes some minerals from the body, such as calcium. Other sources of protein are beans of all kinds, avocados, and eggs, but you should limit these to three a week.
 - Water should be filtered for all food purposes. When I tested tap water on an elimination diet it put me in bed!
 - Cut out tea and coffee if you can. They wash out the good nutrients from your system and are also bad for arthritis. There are substitutes - herb teas, Bambu coffee,

etc. I personally mostly stick to spring water, also vegetable juices. Experiment with herbal teas.

- Cut down on fruit, especially red fruit such as berries, grapes and plums. This can cause a dramatic improvement to your condition. An occasional apple, pear or banana is usually O.K. unless you have Candida, when even fruit sugars are not advisable.
- Vinegar for me is a 'killer', so this includes anything which contains it - mayonnaise, salad cream, pickles, etc.
- Avoid sugar - it is an unnatural substance for our bodies and not good for arthritis, especially if you have Candida, which is more common than most people realise.
- Read the small print on tins, etc. If there are preservatives, colourings or flavourings do not purchase it.
- Garlic is excellent for arthritis and health generally, but it should be raw. One way to have it is to chop a clove finely and place on bread (wholemeal) or toast, with cold-pressed oil.
- If you have a wheat problem, buy rye bread or Ryvita. Rice cakes are useful. You could try gluten free or soda bread. Try to avoid commercial cereals, especially those which contain sugar or salt. At the health stores there is Rice Cereal, Organic Corn flakes, etc. I often just eat 'pobs' - made of rye bread with warm Soya milk, Rice Dream, or even just water!
- Steaming vegetables is the best way to cook them. Baking is also fine, but frying is not recommended. Fish may be steamed, poached or grilled.

3. Supplements. We are not getting the minerals and vitamins that our bodies need, as nowadays the soil is de-natured owing to over-production. Really the only way to access these nutrients is through taking supplements. Minerals work in co-operation with each other so it is best to take a general mineral and vitamin supplement such as the one made by Solgar.

Another Solgar supplement which contains essential minerals for arthritis is Calcium, Magnesium and Boron. This also helps to keep osteoporosis at bay. Anti-oxidants which combat disease are found in zinc, selenium, beta carotene and vitamins A, C and E. One of the best supplements you can take for arthritis is Glucosamine. This protects joints against inflammation and assists in repairing damaged joints. The longer you take it the better the effects.

Another product for rebuilding joints is L. Glutamine - also for healing the gut in Candida. For pain you can take DLPA, which also improves energy, as does sea-weed in the form of kelp. The Arthritic Association's Energy Plus tablet contains this. Also for pain is quercetin. Echinacea is excellent for the immune system, but take it for only two weeks each month, then omit it for two weeks.

Other supplements include Fish Oil, Evening Primrose oil and Flax seed oil. These contain Omega 3 and 6 oils - essential fatty acids.

To help with digestion and internal discomfort, there are digestive enzymes; another product is Swedish Bitters, which make you feel really comfortable inside.

4. Walking in the fresh air is excellent, especially under trees where the air is really fresh. Aim for at least twenty minutes a day. We are lucky in Sheffield to have so many parks to walk in. Breathing deeply and steadily slows the heartbeat and lowers blood pressure.

5. Relaxation. Stress, of any kind, is responsible for many illnesses. Ways to deal with it include yoga, Tai Chi, dancing, singing, etc. Rest before you get over-tired. Always listen to your body. When relaxing lying down, let go of any thoughts which come into your head and relax completely, even if it is only for twenty minutes or so. When resting try to pause between breaths. Try to stay in the present moment - not thinking of the past or the future. Just concentrate on the breathing.
6. Exercise. Walking uses the weight-bearing joints and helps to counteract osteoporosis. Swimming also is excellent. Ideally you should go through an exercise regime each day, if you can, moving each part of your body to its limit. You can get an exercise tape from the physiotherapy therapy department of your local hospital.

Complementary therapies are often extremely helpful. Ones I have found especially useful include Kinesiology, Osteopathy, Acupuncture, Shiatsu and of course Spiritual Healing which frequently initiates the person's own healing processes to be put into operation.

Massage can be done by a friend or relative, or even by yourself, if you can reach the places! Always massage towards the heart, never massage an inflamed joint, and do not massage the spine. If you have a heart condition, only gentle massage is advised. I cannot overstress how therapeutic this is, in relieving pain. It is also very nurturing.

I do advise you to join the Arthritic Association. Their preparations do not contain any drugs - they are made from herbs and other natural substances. Membership costs £6 a year.

The address is:

The Arthritic Association
1 Upperton Gardens
Eastbourne
E. Sussex
BN21 2A.
Tel: 01323 416550

The Arthritis Association lists several helpful books. Other useful books include:

Arthritis, Allergy, Nutrition and the Environment, by Dr. John Mansfield (Thorsons, £8.99).

Say No to Arthritis, by Patrick Holford (ION Press, £5.95).

Raw Energy, by Leslie and Susannah Kenton (Arrow, £5.99).

You Can Heal Your Life, by Louise Hay (£7.99). This contains affirmations which help you to be positive and have a powerful effect on the mind.

Juice therapy books, obtainable from Health Food Stores.

Kathryn Lausevic
www.skylark-kl.co.uk