

Real Help for Osteoarthritis

By Stuart H Freedenfeld, MD

Osteoarthritis (OA), the most common type of joint disease, is a degeneration of the smooth cartilage surface that covers the bones at their joints. Cartilage is the shiny white stuff you have seen on the ends of the chicken bones. This surface is always being broken down and remodeled year after year to keep it vital and healthy. Over time the rate of repair may not be able to keep up with the rate of breakdown and that's when degeneration begins. Excessive stress on the joint, from stressful activities or excess weight, will increase the rate of breakdown and promote OA.

Primary symptoms of OA are stiffness after periods of rest, pain with extended use, and grinding sounds or sensations with movement of the joint. There may also be a sense of instability in the joint feeling like it is not sturdy and sometimes a knee joint may buckle or "give out" while walking. X-rays may show joint space narrowing or "bone-on-bone" deformity due to the loss of cartilage and there may be bone spurs at the edges of the joints.

"Itis" in medicine means inflammation but osteoarthritis is not an inflammatory disease. It is a degenerative disease. In fact the very process that the body uses to repair joint cartilage and the supporting ligaments, that strengthen and stabilize the joint, require inflammatory activity to heal.

Glucoseaminoglycans, or GAGS, are the building blocks of cartilage and they consist mainly of glucosamines. Anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDS, like ibuprofen are effective pain killers but unfortunately they directly interfere with production of GAGS and actually promote arthritic degeneration. In addition they are a major cause of morbidity and mortality especially in the aging population. Their side effects account for 1/3 of the total cost of arthritis care, cause GI bleeding in 1-3% of users and account for 80,000 hospitalizations and 24,000 deaths per year.

NATURAL TREATMENTS

Glucosamine sulfate is the major component of cartilage. It is well absorbed from the gut, has few if any side effects and, with a good quality product, you can expect to see results in 4 to 6 weeks and continued improvement with time. It is my experience that chondroitin sulfate probably adds nothing to the effect and occasionally can cause bleeding problems (it is related to heparin). Other supplements including MSM, if used in high enough doses, Type II Collagen and omega 3 oils have known benefits.

Hyaluronic acid (HA) is the major component of joint fluid and is the ingredient in Synvisc ® type joint injections. These injections often offer a few months of pain relief and can be repeated every 6 months. HA can also be taken orally to improve lubrication and rejuvenate aged skin.

Natural supplements such as curcumin, boswellia, ginger root, bromelaine, sea cucumber, cat's claw and cetyl myristoleate, to name a few, all have demonstrated benefits and can be effectively combined to gain needed improvements. The B vitamin niacinamide can improve range of motion in stiff joints and proteolytic enzymes, along with d-phenylalanine can help control pain until healing is adequate. Capsaicin can be applied topically for pain relief although the relief may take several weeks to occur. And there are studies showing the effectiveness of applying certain leeches to the skin over damaged joints with excellent pain relief.

THE MIRACLE OF OZONE

I have often said that if I had to give up using everything else and only choose one mode of treatment, there is no question in my mind that I would choose ozone. Ozone is a gas that is naturally produced from oxygen in the air. This commonly happens during lightening storms when the electric discharge causes oxygen (O₂) to break apart and recombine as ozone (O₃). Ozone rapidly reverts back to oxygen.

It is the process of ozone returning to its oxygen form that gives us the remarkable benefits of this substance. The list of benefits reported in the scientific and medical literature is formidable. In fact, ozone may be medicine's best kept secret.

Ozone is one of the most powerful promoters of growth factors known in medicine. When injected into arthritic joints it stimulates cartilage producing cells (chondrocytes) to lay down new cartilage at an accelerated rate. When injected around damaged ligaments it stimulates fibroblasts to produce strong new ligaments to tighten loose joints. When injected into damaged ligaments or tendons it stimulates repair and healing.

I have treated hundreds of patients with severely damaged joints and ligaments and have been amazed at the speed and quality of healing. Patients already scheduled for joint replacement have been able to cancel their surgery and resume healthy active lifestyles. What a joy to participate in such a wonderful opportunity to bring a body back to its natural state of health without drugs or surgery.

For more information on the use of ozone in sciatica and much more information on natural health care opportunities please visit our website at www.stocktonfp.com and click on the medical information tab.