

# Arthritis

The term arthritis is used to describe painful conditions of the joints. Two of the most common faults are rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and osteoarthritis. Rheumatoid Arthritis:

RA is a chronic inflammatory disease where the immune system attacks the joints. It affects two to three percent of the population and is three times more common in women than men. The main symptom is joint pain and stiffness, especially in the hands, wrists, knees and feet. The joints may also appear swollen. The most common age to develop RA is 30 to 35, but it can affect any age group, even children. Osteoarthritis:

OA is usually associated with the normal wear and tear of joint tissues that can come with ageing. Around eight out of ten people over 50 are affected to some degree. It starts when cartilage degenerates over time, most commonly in the hands and weight bearing joints such as hips and knees.

Supplement help:

Many natural supplements can offer relief from the pain and discomfort of both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Rheumatoid Arthritis:

Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish oils, have natural anti-inflammatory properties. If you don't eat oily fish regularly, you may benefit from a daily fish oil-based supplement, such as cod liver oil.

Green-lipped mussels, which grow off the coast of New Zealand, contain an anti-inflammatory compound that research has found to be just as potent as commonly prescribed painkillers. Extracts of the mussels are also available as a supplement. Another good anti-inflammatory which may help reduce symptoms is the herb cat's claw. Osteoarthritis:

One of the most widely researched supplements proven to help osteoarthritis is glucosamine sulphate, an essential building block in the manufacture of cartilage tissue. The recommended dose is 1500mg a day. It may take several weeks or even a couple of months to feel the effects – after which time you can lower the dose.

Marine chondroitin, a naturally occurring substance, is most effective when taken with glucosamine sulphate. It seems to work by attracting fluid into the joint cartilage tissue, which may help improve spongy, shock-absorbing qualities. Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM) is an organic compound containing sulphur, which may help reduce the pain and inflammation associated with osteoarthritis. It is available as a powder or capsule. Herbal help:

Herbs with anti-inflammatory or pain-relieving properties can make a great difference to people with both forms of arthritis.

Boswellia, a herb used in Ayurvedic medicine (the traditional medicine of India), has reduced symptoms of arthritis in several scientific trials.

Turmeric is the yellow spice commonly used to make curries and can be taken as a supplement. Turmeric is a potent anti-inflammatory, helping protect the body against free radical damage.

A cream containing capsaicin (a substance found in cayenne peppers and emu oil) can also help relieve pain during flare-ups, though a doctor should supervise its use. While the cream may cause a burning sensation at first, the burning should lessen with each application.

Devil's claw is a useful herb for arthritis, offering both anti-inflammatory and pain relieving benefits.

Diet and lifestyle:

Get moving! One of the best ways to keep aches and pains at bay is to exercise regularly. This will improve muscle strength and boost joint health and function; however sports that involve twisting and turning, such as squash, football, rugby and skiing, can damage joints and should be avoided.

Some people might find that an exercise programme can increase pain, but gentle activities, such as yoga stretches, swimming, walking and dancing, can be beneficial. A weight-bearing exercise programme can really help RA sufferers who take low-dose steroid therapy by boosting their physical function, activity and fitness levels.

Being overweight or obese increases the risk of osteoarthritis developing in weight-bearing joints, while losing weight – even if arthritis has already developed – may reduce pain and stiffness.

Change you diet! Dietary changes can have a significant impact on the effects of both rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis:

Eliminating foods from the nightshade family of plants might help. The nightshade foods we most commonly eat are tomatoes, potatoes, peppers (including paprika and hot pepper sauces) and aubergines. They contain a substance called solanine, which seems to make osteoarthritis worse in some sufferers. The downside is that it may take around six months to feel the benefit. Rheumatoid arthritis:

Eat plenty of foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Oily fish (mackerel, sardines, salmon and trout) and flaxseed oil are the best sources.

Omega-3's natural anti-inflammatory properties may help ease the pain and stiffness of arthritis. Two to three portions a week of oily fish are recommended. More food facts:

There is some evidence that consumption of olive oil, which is rich in oleic acid, may decrease the risk of developing RA and also help improve the symptoms.

RA can be linked to allergies and food sensitivities, and some people find symptoms worsen when they eat foods to they are allergic or sensitive. You can try identifying and eliminating foods that trigger your symptoms with the help if a GP. Supplements and herbs mentioned in this article are available to buy online now:

- Omega-3
- Cod liver oil
- Green-lipped mussels
- Glucosamine sulphate
- Marine chondroitin
- Turmeric
- Devil's claw
- Olive oil