

Painful Joints & Stiff Muscles?

Learn How to Move Freely and Without Pain Using Herbs and Nutrients



For over 54 million Americans simple movements can be painful due to arthritis, a disease involving inflammation in the joints. On top of that statistic, about 30% of all Americans are currently experiencing back pain, which is the number one cause of lost work days and the leading cause of disability worldwide. When you add to these numbers all the people who suffer from other forms of muscle and joint pain, over one-third of the population can't enjoy simple, pain-free movement. That's not good!

You might think these muscle and joint problems only affect people who are getting old, but that's simply not the case. The arthritis statistics include 300 thousand children and according to the Arthritis Foundation, two-thirds of those suffering from arthritis are adults of working age. Back pain also primarily affects adults of working age and is one of the more frequent reasons adults visit doctors.



Pain Medications Aren't the Answer

Most people end up taking pain-relieving medications—NSAIDs and other analgesics to relieve these aches and pains. And while they relieve the symptoms, they don't actually fix the problem. What is needed is a way to restore muscles and joints back to a healthy, pain-free state.

These muscle and joint pains typically involve chronic inflammation of the tissues or muscle spasms. Unlike the inflammation associated with acute injury, the inflammatory process isn't ending and healing is not taking place. The chronic inflammation isn't just local either, it's often linked with systemic inflammation that's causing other health problems, too. For example, nearly half of all adults with heart disease or diabetes (which also involve chronic inflammation) have arthritis as well.

Chronic muscle and joint issues are also linked with nutritional deficiencies. Without the proper nutrients, structural tissues can't maintain themselves against the wear and tear of normal activity. Even when they are present in the diet, poor digestion or impeded circulation may prevent these nutrients from getting to the tissues that need them.

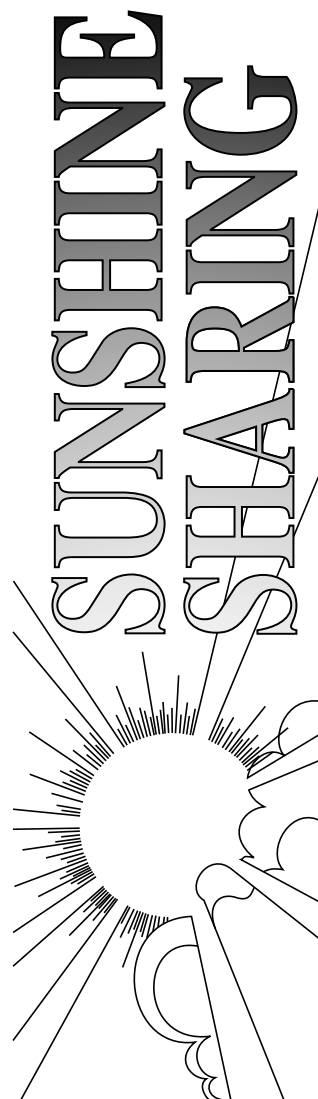
Another possible root cause of muscle and joint pain is stress. When you're stressed or traumatized your muscles can become tense. This can pull the body out of alignment and create physical stress on bones and joints that causes chronic inflammation and pain.

This issue of *Sunshine Sharing* was written for everyone who is unable to move without stiffness and pain. In it, we'll talk about some natural alternatives to over-the-counter and prescription pain relieving medications, but we'll go far beyond this symptomatic relief. We'll look at the underlying causes of stiff and painful movement and talk about how to eliminate them.

Fixing the root causes will lead to real healing and often produces permanent relief. So, if you're suffering from joint and/or muscle pain, read this issue carefully and start working on the root causes of your problem so you learn how to move freely again.

Learn more inside...

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Three Critical Steps to Pain-Free Movement

To fix the root causes of joint and muscle pain on a physical level, you need to do three things. First, you need to remove the sources of irritation that are causing the inflammation and tension. Second, you need to reduce the inflammation to initiate the healing process. And finally, you need to make sure that the body has the nutrients it needs to repair the damaged tissues.

Each step is necessary, and they all must be addressed to achieve lasting and permanent relief. So, let's look closely at each step.

Step One: Remove the Mechanical and Chemical Irritation

Nothing can heal if you keep damaging it. In the case of all chronic muscle and joint pain, there is something causing ongoing irritation and damage. This source of irritation must be removed or the tissues will keep getting irritated and inflamed over and over.

Mechanical Irritation

In osteoarthritis, and in the case of most back and muscle pain, the damage is typically caused by ongoing mechanical stress. This is the result of repetitive movements that are often connected to poor structural alignment. For example, sitting at a desk and typing for hours and hours puts chronic stress on the neck, shoulders and wrists. Poor posture when lifting things, walking or sitting also causes mechanical stress. Repetitive movements, associated with a job, that aren't balanced by rest and stretching can also cause mechanical stress.



Checking your posture is a good place to start. Learn how to sit, stand and lift things using proper posture. A body worker such as a chiropractor or massage therapist may be able to give you some guidance about posture. If engaged in a mechanically repetitive activity, try to take a 5 minute break every hour or two to stretch and allow the associated muscles to relax.

Various forms of bodywork, such as therapeutic stretching, yoga, tai chi, chiropractic care and massage can help to ease mechanical stress and help you have better structural alignment.

Excess weight also puts stress on joints, so you may need to lose weight. Poor structural alignment can also be the result of unresolved trauma and stress (see sidebar *Grace and Gracefulness*).

Chemical Irritation

In the case of rheumatoid, allergic or gouty arthritis, and in some forms of chronic muscle pain, there may also be biochemical stress on the tissues. Here are some things to consider.

Many people have discovered that food allergies or sensitivities are at the root of their joint and muscle pain. By simply eliminating problematic foods, their pain and stiffness subsides.

For example, nightshade vegetables, which include tomatoes, potatoes, green peppers and eggplant, are problematic for many people with arthritis as they adversely affect calcium metabolism. Wheat, corn, gluten and dairy are also problematic for many people.

Another culprit is citrus fruits, especially oranges, and other store-bought fruits which have been picked before they are fully ripe.

One way to determine if food is part of the problem is to do some short fasts. If fasting, on either water only or vegetable juices only, eases pain and stiffness you probably have food sensitivities or allergies that are causing chemical irritation and inflammation. Try eliminating some of the more common food allergens and see if your symptoms improve.

Many people have also discovered that a diet high in foods that have been traditionally considered acid-forming, such as animal proteins, grains, beans and cheese, is causing stiffness and pain. Eating a diet with more foods traditionally considered alkaline-forming, primarily fresh fruits and vegetables, and drinking more pure water eases their muscle tension and pain.

A primary function of the kidneys is to flush acid waste from the body. Poor kidney function, due to dehydration or kidney weakness, can also make the body stiff and achy.

Try drinking more pure water if you have a lot of pain instead of soda pop, coffee, tea or milk. Taking a *Kidney Chi Tonic*, containing morinda root, eucommia bark and dipsacus (teasel) root, may also help as it improves the kidney's ability to filter acid.

Step Two: Reduce Inflammation and Relax Muscle Tension

Various herbs and nutrients can be used to help reduce or reverse the inflammation, ease pain and promote healing without the side effects of many common pain-relieving medications.

Anti-Inflammatory and Analgesic Herbs

For example, herbs containing salicylates, the forerunner of modern aspirin, have been used for thousands of years to ease joint and muscle pain. The most famous of these salicylate-bearing herbs is white willow bark, but other plants containing salicylates include black willow, black cohosh and wintergreen oil. Black cohosh is also helpful as an antispasmodic muscle relaxant to ease cramping.

Another useful herb for joint and muscle pain and inflammation is boswellia, a tree related to frankincense. Clinical trials in both India and Germany noted significant improvements in pain and stiffness in patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis who used it. It has also been used for osteoarthritis, bursitis and tendonitis.

Curcumin, a compound found in turmeric, is another potent anti-inflammatory that can help to reverse inflammation and relieve pain. It inhibits activity of the transcription factor NF-kB, a pro-inflammatory messenger. Clinical research suggests it can be a valuable remedy in treating rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and other inflammatory conditions.

For instance, in a study of 18 patients with rheumatoid arthritis, taking 1200 mg of curcumin daily was as effective as taking 300 mg per day of phenylbutazone, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug. Curcumin was effective in reducing morning stiffness and joint swelling. Other studies have produced similar favorable results.

So, to ease inflammation and pain try taking a *Standardized Curcumin Extract* containing curcumin from turmeric root and

black pepper, or take a **Natural Anti-Inflammatory Formula** containing extracts of willow bark, turmeric and boswellia. These formulas have a benefit drugs don't have. They don't just relieve symptoms, they can actually help tissues heal.

Essential Fatty Acids

Other useful supplements to consider are various essential fatty acids (EFAs). EFAs produce chemical messengers that mediate inflammation and pain. Omega-3 EFAs are well known for their ability to help the body produce more anti-inflammatory messengers. Try taking an **Omega-3 Fatty Acid Supplement** from fish oils, especially if you have other signs of systemic inflammation.

Certain plant seed oils have a significant amount of omega-3 EFAs, along with a special omega-6 EFA gamma-linolenic acid (GLA). GLA converts to compounds with a strong anti-inflammatory and immune modulating effects that can help alleviate joint and muscle pain, especially in rheumatoid arthritis. So, you can also try taking a **GLA Supplement** containing evening primrose oil, borage oil and black currant oil.

Taking the Tension Away

Back and neck pain is often due to muscle tension from poor posture, muscle fatigue and other forms of mechanical stress. The first thing to try when muscle tension, cramps or spasms are present is **magnesium**. Magnesium is essential for muscle relaxation and up to 70% of the population are deficient in it. Symptoms that you may need more magnesium (besides the muscle tension or cramps) include insomnia, nervousness, tics and twitches, frequent headaches, fatigue and constipation.



You can also use antispasmodic herbs like lobelia and black cohosh to ease cramps and spasms. These can be applied topically or taken internally.

Circulation and Topical Analgesics

Before proceeding to Step Three, it's important to understand that circulation to the tissues is impaired when tissues are inflamed as stagnant fluid accumulates in the inflamed areas. Removing this fluid not only helps reduce inflammation, it promotes healing. It also helps ensure that the nutrients provided in Step Three will reach the areas where they are needed.

Self-massaging painful areas will improve blood and lymph flow. It works best when you apply topical analgesics (and possibly antispasmodics) while doing the massage and you massage the tissue several times a day (massaging again before pain returns). A **Topical Analgesic Blend** will contain essential oils like wintergreen, camphor, clove and menthol.

Mild exercise that doesn't put stress on the joints will improve blood flow and lymph drainage to bring healing energy to the joints.

Step Three: Supply Nutrients for Bone, Muscle and Joint Health

When a person is injured, the body sets about making repairs to the injury. This process requires nutrients, whether you are dealing with acute injury or chronic irritation. In the case of chronic joint and muscle pain these nutrients will help once the mechanical and/or chemical sources of irritation are removed and the inflammation is reduced.

Continued on page 4



Grace and Gracefulness

Have you ever watched wild animals move? Perhaps you've seen squirrels chasing each other up and down the branches of a tree.

Maybe you've seen deer bounding effortlessly through the woods. Wild animals are naturally graceful, their bodies move in a smooth, flowing, uninhibited manner. The same is usually true for children.

In contrast, the movements of adults are often stiff, jerky, awkward and imbalanced. This lack inability to move with grace also tends to increase with age.

It's not just the problem of mechanical or chemical irritation that causes people to lose this natural state of grace. There is a mental-emotional-spiritual aspect as well, because grace is more than physical.

For example, a person who is socially gracious is able to move through social situations without causing social friction or tension. A person who is free from a burden of toxic guilt, shame and fear, has peace and harmony within themselves which allows them to move through life with emotional and spiritual grace.

In contrast, when a person is traumatized, they freeze. Their muscles tense and lock. Stress does the same thing to a lesser extent. You may notice for example, that your neck, shoulders or back feel tense when you feel burdened and overwhelmed. Your legs may ache when you have problems moving forward in life and your hurting feet may signal you don't feel supported.

Poor posture is often a sign of a lack of self-esteem. When you're feeling ashamed of the way you acted you naturally hang your head and tense your pelvis (that is you tuck your tailbone between your legs).

This creates stress on your neck and back muscles, so they tense up, and you experience pain as a result.

So, it's important to look beyond the physical when trying to understand why you may not be able to move in a graceful, pain-free way. If you allow them to, the aches and pains you experience can help you reflect deeply on your life, get in touch with buried emotions and hurts and make appropriate changes to the way you think and live.

Plants can help here, too. For example, willow, long used for easing arthritis, has also been used as a flower remedy for helping people to let go of the past and forgive, so they can be more emotionally flexible. So, also consider using flower essences or essential oils as emotional remedies to aid your ability to move through life with ease and grace.

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Continued from page 3

One reason so many people experience these (and other) chronic health issues is that they are consuming a lifeless, nutritionally-deficient diet. A diet higher in fruits and vegetables and lower in chemical-laden processed foods is essential for general health, including reversing chronic joint and muscle pain. One can also take various supplements to supply nutrients that can both repair and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints. Here are some of the most important nutrients to consider.

Minerals and Vitamins

Bone is largely made of minerals, primarily calcium, laid down in a protein matrix. Muscles and joints also require minerals for health. Unfortunately, most people aren't getting enough minerals.

Although many people supplement with calcium, the truth is that structural weakness is rarely a deficiency of calcium. Calcium can't be utilized without other minerals like **magnesium**, **zinc**, boron, selenium and silica, which are also used in bones and joints.

Silica is an overlooked nutrient that helps make joints more flexible and resilient, so they are less susceptible to damage from repetitive movement. Silica also helps tissues to be more flexible and less brittle. If your fingernails break easily or you have frayed hair, you should consider taking a **Silica Supplement** containing the silica-rich herbs horsetail and dulse.

One also can't utilize calcium without **vitamin D3**, which is a major nutrient deficiency in 90% of the population. Vitamin D3 is essential for affixing calcium into bones and teeth. Vitamin A, vitamin C and several of the B-complex vitamins are also critical to the utilization of minerals and the health of bones and joints.

Other Helpful Nutrients

Here are some other supplements to consider.

Glucosamine is an amino sugar normally found in the human body and is the base material for making up mucous membranes, ligaments, tendons and synovial fluid in the joints. It helps joints to heal and can help them become more fluid and well lubricated.

Chondroitin is a long chain of repeating sugars found naturally in the joints and connective tissues. It helps to produce new cartilage and protects existing cartilage. Chondroitin helps by interfering with enzymes that destroy cartilage molecules and enzymes that prevent nutrients from reaching the cartilage.

Structural Support Supplements

These and many other nutrients essential for healthy bones and joints can be obtained naturally from bone broth. They are also available in a **Joint Healing Supplement** which combines glucosamine and chondroitin with MSM, an anti-inflammatory sulfur compound. There is also a **Joint Healing Cream** for topical application that contains glucosamine and MSM.

Cartilage, ligaments and tendons are primarily made of collagen. This means a **Collagen Supplement** can be useful in preventing damaged cartilage from hardening and in promoting joint healing.

An effective **Bone and Structural Support Formula**, needs to contain more than calcium. To aid the health of bones, teeth and joints, it should also contain magnesium, boron, zinc and vitamins A, C and D. This can be taken to prevent bone loss and deterioration as well as to help heal broken or damaged bones and joints.

Joint Health Formulas contain herbs and nutrients to help in all three critical steps to pain-free movement. They aid detoxification using alteratives and diuretics to flush toxins and acid waste, such as celery seed, hydrangea, burdock and sarsaparilla. They also contain herbs for inflammation such as yucca, black cohosh, boswellia and guggul. Finally, they contain herbs that supply minerals (like silica) for healing tissues, such as alfalfa and horsetail. Taken regularly, they will also aid bone, muscle and joint health.

Additional Help and Information

For more information about relieving tension and pain contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

PDR for Nutritional Supplements, chief editor Sheldon Saul Hendler

PDR for Herbal Medicines 4th Edition, chief editor Thomas Fleming, RPh

The Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants by Andrew Chevallier

Get a Grip on Arthritis and Other Inflammatory Disorders by Lorna Vanderhaeghe