

By Lori Murdock

ARTHRITIS UPSET

- Q. I recently read about arthritis drugs having problems with cancer and liver failure. I have been taking something for arthritis for years. There were some medications that I could not take because it upset my stomach. Are there natural options for me?
- A. Rheumatoid arthritis is an inflammatory disease in which one's own immune system overreacts and causes swelling and destruction in joints. The medications used for rheumatoid arthritis have more problems than basic anti-inflammatory drugs. It sounds like your problem may be osteoarthritis, which is also joint damage, but is more often associated with aging. Osteoarthritis is considered a wear and tear condition and is by far the most popular type of arthritis experienced in the general population.

There are two approaches here that can be used separately or integrated. The first is a prescription approach. There are oral anti-inflammatory medications available that are effective in reducing the symptoms associated with arthritis. These medications can also be compounded into a topical medication that is applied to the skin in the area of the problem. These topical medications have fewer side effects (stomach upset) and are great if you only have certain joints that are a problem.

The other approach involves natural remedies. The natural model considers arthritis to be the result of toxins being deposited in connective tissue (joints), which cause inflammation, discomfort and pain. The approach here is to attempt to identify the sources of the toxin, eliminate exposure, and assist the body in some detoxification process. An example of toxins could be chemicals related to jobs, poor diet, food allergies, or pollution.

Diet should be regulated to discourage inflammatory reactions. Omega-3 fatty acids are a natural anti-inflammatory food. These are found in fish oil and flax oil. Fish oil can sometimes work better for inflammatory conditions. These 'good' fats also benefit the cardiovascular system, diabetes and are a good general supplement for most everyone. Other helpful supplements include glucosamine, MSM, enzymes, and multi-vitamins for inflammatory conditions. Adequate water intake is also very important for joint comfort. If you are dehydrated, fluid in the joints decreases causing friction and further wear.

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