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Number of People Suffering From Osteoarthritis Has Doubled

By Dr. Mercola | August 30th, 2017

Arthritis is a general term for over 100 different conditions that affect your joints and surrounding tissues. Any joint in the body may be affected, but the most common are the knees, hips, hands and wrists. The two most common forms of arthritis are osteoarthritis (OA) and rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Both forms of the disease cause significant pain and discomfort in the joints, but the triggers behind the conditions are different.

RA is an autoimmune disease where your body's immune system mistakenly attacks the joints by releasing enzymes that damage the lining. The disease is chronic and progressive, causing inflammation that results in painful deformity and immobility. It usually occurs in the fingers, thumb, wrists, elbows, shoulders, knees, feet and ankles. RA may also trigger other systemic symptoms such as inflammation in the lungs and eyes, nodules under the skin, fatigue, fever and weight loss.

About 1.5 million people in the U.S. have RA; nearly three times more women than men have the disease. On the other hand, over 30 million U.S. adults suffer from OA, which is the most common form of arthritis and sometimes called degenerative joint disease. Unfortunately, researchers have found the number of people suffering from OA is rising and your risk of suffering from the condition may be higher than the one your grandparents experienced.

What Is Osteoarthritis?

OA more commonly affects the weight-bearing joints in your body, such as your knees, hips, lower back, neck and the small bones in your hands. The joints more often affected are those repeatedly used performing a task or playing a favorite sport. Your hips, knees, bones in your hands and lower back may be affected from carrying excess weight.

Injury or repeated wear on the joint may cause the cartilage between the bones to wear, resulting in bone rubbing on bone. As a result, you lose joint flexibility, bony spurs develop and you experience joint swelling and pain. Nearly 10 percent of men and 30 percent of women age 60 and older will suffer from OA. The condition appears to have multifactorial etiology and may be a product of interaction between environmental and systemic factors. Factors that appear to increase your risk of developing OA include:

Obesity	Lack of activity	Increasing age
Female	Repeated knee injuries	Muscle weakness
Repetitive joint use	High bone density	Joint laxity
Poor posture	Occupations that require repeated squatting and lifting	Congenital joint or cartilage deformity

Your Risk of Osteoarthritis Is Higher Than Your Grandparents' Risk

The rise in incidence of OA was staggering. All of the remains were from people over the age of 50. Researchers analyzed over 1,500 who died between 1905 and 1940, and 819 who died between 1976 and 2015. They found that knee OA was 2.5

times more common when you were born in the post-industrial age as when you were born in the late 1800s. They also found the rate of having OA in both knees in the post-industrial era was 1.4 times higher.

Inactivity May Play a Leading Role

The No. 1 cause of disability in the U.S. is arthritis. Senior study author Daniel Lieberman, Ph.D., paleoanthropologist at Harvard University, hopes the results of this study, demonstrating a rising number of people suffering from OA in the knees, will lead to a change in perception about the condition. Lieberman says:

“Understanding the origins of knee osteoarthritis is an urgent challenge because the disease is almost entirely untreatable apart from joint replacement, and once someone has knee osteoarthritis, it creates a vicious circle. People become less active, which can lead to a host of other problems, and their health ends up declining at a more rapid rate.”

Although the study looked at the difference in numbers of individuals who suffered from OA over thousands of years, the researchers could only theorize what the lifestyle differences were that created such variability. They speculate that one of the primary factors is inactivity. Lieberman posits:

“The most important message here is that we shouldn't consider arthritis a wear-and-tear disease of age. Arthritis is a disease that becomes more common as you age, but it's not caused by 'wear and tear'; if anything, it might be caused by the absence of physical activity.”

Thus, one of the greatest tools you may have to prevent the most common type of arthritic condition is to just keep moving. It is important to differentiate between movement and exercise as it pertains to reducing your risk of OA. Your body was designed to move and not sit for long hours.

Natural Pain Relievers and Anti-Inflammatory Supplements

As you consider the strategies outlined below to relieve pain, remember to include omega-3 fats, astaxanthin, vitamin D and bone broth to reduce inflammation and help your body repair minor damage. Incorporate movement into your hourly routine to reduce the potential you'll develop OA and to keep your joints flexible and strong, thus reducing the need for pain control.

Diet

The foods you eat are primary keys in the reduction of inflammation that results in pain and disease. Diet can either prevent or trigger inflammation, so while adding some foods to your daily diet, you'll want to remove others.

Processed foods often contain soy, sugar, high fructose corn syrup and trans fats that trigger inflammation. Foods cooked at high temperatures, especially with vegetable oil, increase inflammation, as do sugar, grains and lectin-rich foods. I strongly suggest avoiding these foods to reduce inflammation.

Curcumin

This is the yellow pigment in turmeric, a spice commonly used in curry. It has an excellent safety profile and there is strong evidence to suggest it is potent against inflammatory diseases. Studies have found it provides strong pain relief and demonstrates long-term improvement in function in OA.

Curcumin also helps stabilize your blood sugar, which plays a role in the inflammatory process. In fact, the spice plays a significant role protecting your health and reducing inflammation. However, achieving optimum therapeutic doses requires supplementation, as in its natural state the bioavailability of curcumin is poor.

Ginger

Commonly known for stomach-settling properties, ginger also offers anti-inflammatory pain relief. Fresh ginger root may be steeped in boiling water and served as tea, or grated into your vegetable juice. Although powder capsules are available, I recommend using the fresh root.

Boswellia

This herb has specific anti-inflammatory ingredients and is one of my personal favorites as I have seen it work well for many rheumatoid arthritis patients, and it achieves good results in studies.

Bromelain

This enzyme is found in pineapples and is a natural anti-inflammatory that may be taken as a supplement, but is also found in enough quantity in pineapples that eating the fresh fruit may also be helpful. It is available as an oral supplement or as a cream.

Cayenne Cream

Also called capsaicin, this cream is derived from dried hot peppers. It alleviates pain by reducing your supply of substance P, a chemical component of nerve cells that transmit pain signals to your brain.

Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) – Done by Naturopaths

EFT is a noninvasive therapeutic tool that may help reduce the toll that pain takes on your emotional health. As stress also increases inflammation and your perception of pain, EFT may help you to manage your pain without pharmaceutical intervention throughout the day.

Most Importantly – Stay WELL-ADJUSTED!