

[IMAGE]

## Get Rid of Joint Issues

By Julie T. Chen, MD

Most of us take full advantage of enjoying the use of our body as long as it allows us to...and moving our bodies as long and as much as we can is indeed encouraged because ultimately our bodies are made to move. However, all too often, people ignore the early signs of aches and pains in our joints until the pain becomes overwhelming or unbearable before medical attention is sought out. One problem with that is that the damage to the joint or ligaments and tendons may be so extreme at that point that frequently steroid injections or surgery is required.

For those of us who would prefer health prevention in all other aspects of our life, I think it would be prudent to have the same philosophy applied to our joints. After all, our joint health allows us to keep us moving long into our later years...as long as we take care of them.

So how might we go about preventing joint damage or protecting our joints?

As most of my patients in my clinic of integrative medicine in San Jose CA know, I am a big fan of using food as medicine. In regards to joint health, antioxidants play a huge role in helping our body heal the tissue in our joints when they undergo stress from our daily activities and stressors. So foods that are rich in vitamin C, A, E, proteins, and other antioxidants like resveratrol are very useful maintaining the health of our joints. If your diet is rich in rainbow-colored vegetables and fruits, you are essentially taking the guess work out of your goal of joint protection because a diet that is focused on those foods naturally are high in the nutrients needed for your joint health.

Joint Issues - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark In regards to supplements that help with mild joint inflammation or regular damage from activities and usage, consider glucosamine with MSM for mild osteoarthritis type symptoms and other supplements such as curcumin, ginger, skullcap, boswellia, omega-3's, rosemary, just to name a few, can be very helpful in decreasing inflammation in a more natural way as well. Having said that, while supplements sound more benign than prescription medications, I always recommend to people that they check with their physician first before starting any new supplements so that your doctor can make sure that you don't have any prior medical history or any medications that may

make taking these supplements problematic.

Now that we've addressed potential joint health promoters via our diet and supplements, let's broach on the topic of our activities that may help or harm our joints.

In regards to exercise...I am a big fan of that for all my patients. You should clear exercise by your doctor before you start and you should always listen to your body and not push beyond any pain. However, exercise on a regular basis is great for our body. So, in order to make sure you keep your joints healthy and happy, make sure that you warm up and cool down before each activity and that you take the time to gently stretch the muscles around your joints. Our muscles support our joints and that's why appropriate stretching and muscle strengthening exercises are so important to joint health.

You should make sure that you buy new work out shoes every few weeks to months if you are running or working out regularly every week so your joints get plenty of cushion and support. You should also have your joints and soft tissue examined by a doctor sooner rather than later if you start to feel instability, hear clicking, or experience pain or limited range of motion. Also, if you see swelling, you should definitely seek out medical care as well.

So, now that we've addressed our health concerns about our joint health, let's take our joints out for a lap around the track or the gym...after all, the holiday season may include a lot of parties and foods that we normally don't eat, so keeping our exercise routine in place on a regular basis is extra important this time of year to keep our health and our waist lines where they should be...just as healthy as our joints!

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