

Arthritis- A Friendly Chat



By Sandra Firman

2009

Sandra
Firman

Digitally signed by Sandra Firman
DN: cn=Sandra Firman, o=Sandi's
Freelance, ou,
email=sandifirman@yahoo.ca, c=CA
Date: 2009.02.17 05:16:36 -05'00'

Arthritis- Definitions and Types

Before we delve into the remedies for arthritis, it is important to understand the two main types of arthritis. There are over one hundred types of arthritis but they all go under the heading of these two main branches:

1. Osteoarthritis

This is my burden in life, the main type and the one most often suffered.

Osteoarthritis means basically the degeneration of joints. Your knees and hips and lower back are giving out on you and the loss of mobility in these joints causes untold pain. If you are an athlete or an older person you most likely suffer from some degree of osteoarthritis. You find that your lower back aches, your knees hurt when you climb stairs and your hips ache if you stand or sit too long. You are not alone. Over 33 million people in the United States suffer from this type of arthritis. This condition can and does result from obesity because the wear and tear also results from the weight-bearing joints start to break down.

With Osteoarthritis, the cartilage or soft bone in the joint begins to wear down. It had been serving as your shock absorber for many years, and protecting the joints from damage. As more damage to your joints occurs over time, the cartilage on the bones of the joint starts to wear away more and more and soon it does not work at all.

The cushioning effect of the cartilage is gone and also the gel-like fluid in the joints. The end result is pain when you run, walk or stand for a long time. You might even hear the grating sound as the joint's rough edges of cartilage rub up against each other. Bone spurs can develop at they end of the bones and they are very painful.

If one area, such as your lower back is affected, there are several vertebrae affected. An x-ray of your lower back and knees will be able to detect the damage and to what degree each is suffering. The diagnostician will be able to pinpoint which S joints or Spinal joints and L joints or Lumbar will need attention, or to what degree you knee joints are affected. After that determination you are responsible for whichever treatment you opt to take, and you need to be informed. Many people continue to live athletic and demanding lives, you will not be compromised by osteoarthritis, but you will need help. And that you have to judge for yourself!

The Second Type of Arthritis

The second most debilitating type of arthritis is called Rheumatoid Arthritis. It is characterized as an enduring disease that affects joints in any part of the body but most especially the hands, wrists and knees. You may remember your grandmother or aunt with gnarled up hands, enlarged knuckles and closed up fists. She was hardly able to lift a spoon or a pot, but she could still cook. The only trouble is she could no longer knit, crochet or do any fine-motor skills. The looks of the hand is the signal that rheumatism has taken over.

In this type of arthritis, the body is attacking itself, called auto-immune disease. There were no damages or accidents to the wrist or knuckles or knees. The body is simply ganging up on itself and causing the joints to swell up and gnarl up. The inflammation in the joints then spreads to any surrounding tissues and can damage the cartilage or bone. In very severe cases rheumatism can spread and do damage to the skin, eyes and nerves.

Lupus, gout and fibromyalgia are also classed under the rheumatoid arthritis branch in which the body is attacking itself and is an auto-immune disease.

The first symptoms of any sort of arthritis are:

- Pain in the joint areas of the body
- Fatigue due to lack of beneficial sleep
- Aches which seem to come and go with changes in the weather
- Diminished capacity of active life
- Joints react with severe stabs of pain
- Lower back aches which start with early morning stiffness and reappear all day
- Pain reappears throughout the day with normal activity

Lupus is an agonizing auto-immune systemic disease in which the antibodies start to attack not only the joints but also the body's organs. The heart, kidneys, eyes, lungs and skin can become involved and slowly fill the patient with agonizing pain. Gout occurs when crystals gather in the joint, as in the knees, and make movement of any sort painful and difficult. The knees, knuckles and toes are the most susceptible to gout. Fibromyalgia is another type of arthritis in which the muscles surrounding the joints are affected with pain and aches. There are 11 points that a rheumatologist checks and at least 8 of them have to react in order to be determined as Fibromyalgia. It is often grouped together with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome but I find that not to be the case. Pain and discomfort is the only characteristic for me with bouts of fatigue on certain days.

Medical Treatment for Arthritis

Now that we have defined what arthritis is, we can discuss what the medical field will offer you in one form or another. The doctors and rheumatologists have diagnosed the arthritis so it their duty to follow through with a medical plan.

You might be offered an anti-inflammatory in pill form. An anti-inflammatory or NSAID is usually very safe to take and does not interfere with any other medication you might be taking. It is used for arthritis pain, sports injuries and headaches. It will relieve the constant pain or ache if taken on schedule, daily and with food. The only side effects that I am familiar with are stomach problems, so take them with food to reduce the risk of an ulcer,

Names of NSAIDs that you might recognize are Naproxen, Celebrex and aspirin. In fact, ordinary baby aspirin of 81 mg is also recommended for heart patients to prevent blood clots. So in addition to relieving pain, aspirin is good for the heart in a small dose every day. An NSAID is fine to relieve the inflammation but the pain is a different matter.

Pain relievers that can be prescribed or sold over the counter are Tylenol, Advil, Motrin, and many others too many of which to include. These pain relievers in addition to the NSAIDs as above would be an adequate combination to help out with the pain and aches of arthritis.

If, however, your arthritis, or disc degeneration is so severe, and the pain unbearable, the doctor may give you a prescription for Tylenol #3 or #4, Oxycocet or Percocet which are very potent. Don't plan on working or driving or taking care of small children if you are taking these on a regular basis. I take mine at night to give me a deep sleep along with Naproxen to reduce the swelling. Also keep in mind that these are narcotics and they are very potent. Do not leave any pills or medication within reach of a baby or youngster, Opiates are also very habit- forming and can become a problem if you take them for a long period of time.

In addition to medication, the doctor may request that you have sports therapy which is a special athletic gym with equipment to reduce the weight bearing on your joints and give your muscles a work out. Physiotherapists are trained to put you on a routine of special equipment to take the pressure off of the joints and to reduce the inflammation. It is wonderful to take part in the facilities and to gain some strength and agility back.

Alternative Methods for Arthritis

For every country, culture and ethnicity there is a cure for arthritis. We are now learning to trust and use the alternative methods which have proven tried and true for centuries for many races. Modern society has the majority of us run to the university trained doctors but we do not necessarily need to choose their suggestions for a cure. I will offer home remedies first because some of them can be made from the garden or from household items. Bear in mind that these are for your perusal and do not promise to cure. Once again, make sure your doctor knows what you are trying.

1. Teas made of just about any herb or root, steeped for two minutes, drunk three times daily
2. Heat apple cider vinegar, pour on a cloth and rub into the sore joints before bed time. Repeat through the night if necessary and once in the morning
3. Drink hot apple cider vinegar mixed with a table spoon of liquid or solid honey, in a tea cup.
4. Thinly -sliced root vegetables such as potato, beets or carrots soaked in wine. After one month of soaking drink the wine twice a day
5. Put a cup of raisins in one cup of gin. When all the liquid has soaked in, take 6-8 raisins a day.
6. Make a hot poultice of flour, hot water, cayenne pepper and mustard powder. Mix all ingredients into a paste and put directly onto sore joints or onto hot, soaked flannelette. Place the cloth or tie around the joint.
7. Take a colon cleansing and a liver cleansing to rid the body of all toxins which is said to cause arthritis
8. Avoid all purified foods such as white sugar, flour, bread and cakes or pies
9. Eat only whole wheat and brown sugar, entire grains and fresh fruits and vegetables. Nothing canned or frozen. As much fresh -caught fish as possible.
10. Use home-made peanut butter if you aren't allergic and make cookies and use on toast with honey. Rub peanut butter onto joints for a few minutes
11. If you are not allergic take a bee and sting the inflamed joint which is introducing a toxin into the system. It is like taking snake venom to counteract a snake bite. Catching the bee might be tricky
12. Hot baths with all joints immersed is an excellent end to the day. It should have Epsom salts or vinegar in the water.

Arthritis and Heat Remedies

I highly recommend heat- applied treatment for arthritis, no matter where the arthritis is located. In this article I am going to talk about heat, its application and saunas.

When the weather changes and the barometer rises or lowers my body seizes up. I rely on a hot water bottle or two placed directly on my lower back or shoulders. Some people like to use both the hot water bottle alternated with an ice bag to relieve the inflammation and pain. The other heat application is a heating pad which is electrical and is very flat so it can be placed under or over the body without interrupting sleep. Try to find the brand of pad which turns off after a few minutes automatically.

Try using an electric blanket for the first few minutes of bed time. The blanket warms up the bed and then I can turn it off. In days gone by the servants would warm the beds of their masters with hot water- filled pans and remove them before they retired for the night. One night I left the blanket turned on all night and I slept like a baby. There is a new contraption that you can put on your chair or flat on your bed which both vibrates at different intervals and heats up as well. I wore mine out.

Saunas are wonderful to release the tension, toxins and pain in your joints. The true Finnish or Swedish method is best, not a dry heat. In the Finnish method, a wood stove heats up the rocks beside it and the building gets very hot. Your body becomes used to the heat gradually. Then you take a cup or a ladle and splash water on the rocks. The steam or humidity fills the room with healing heat and you sit for 10-12 minutes with a towel on. Then you run out and jump into the snow or lake and cool off in the most exhilarating way.

For the arthritic, don't jump into the lake or snow. Just enjoy the heat and humidity. However, please check with your physician, because people who have high blood pressure may not be able to use the sauna. I can only go in a sauna for 5 minutes tops before I can feel my condition worsening. Hot tubs are the same. Swirling water in a hot tub is great, but I can only do that for a few minutes. Newer style bathtubs, called jet whirlpool bathtubs, are a delight. You don't have to leave or go anywhere, just straight to bed after a good soak. So heat does do wonders for the arthritic patient but, like everything else, do it in moderation.

Topical Skin Treatments for Arthritis

Now that we have covered the home remedies for arthritis and its varied applications, I would like to talk about the application to the body of treatment via the skin. The skin, or epidermis, is the body's largest organ. It is filled with pores, hair and various other contents including perspiration, which is a haven in which to treat the body. The Chinese, or Oriental, method of acupuncture is becoming more accepted and has been used since the beginning of time.

Acupuncture believes in curing the qi or the flow of vitality by inserting ultra thin, filament needles into the epidermis in the meridians of the body. If the qi or flow of goodness, blood and nutrition to all the organs and joints is disrupted, then poor health and arthritis will follow. I cannot possibly describe all the points of entry nor what they encompass but each organ and each joint has a specific spot on the body which can be treated by the needles. Once the needles are inserted, the doctor will let you rest and then he re-enters to touch the tops of them to add stimulus and minutes later you are done.

Before he starts, the traditional acupuncturist will study your mouth and teeth, gums and tongue to detect the areas of illness. He will take your pulse on both wrists at the same time to detect your strong and weak sides. He will notice your breath and body odor. Then he knows what to do. Acupuncture treatment takes several weeks or months to react before a noticeable change takes place. It can be used in other diseases and conditions. I tried acupuncture but the cost was not covered by any plan and I could no longer afford to continue.

In the same vein, the TENS machine is a good tool for some sufferers. TENS or transcutaneous electrical neuron stimulator is a compact unit with wires which attach to the skin with pads. The pads are placed around the tender or painful area and then the unit is turned on. With dials and various intensities, the wires stimulate the nerves and much like acupuncture are supposed to reduce the pain and tenderness. I had a unit and wore it out. It feels really good while it is on but like everything else, the effect on me is temporary. You can carry the TENS around in your pocket or attach it to your belt and use it while you are working.

Ultrasound and Infrasond Therapy

We have all heard in the past 40 years that we can have a picture or sonogram taken of a fetus in vitro, still in the womb. This picture of the baby is taken using ultra high sound waves which are conducted into the womb via a transducer and some conduction gel. It helps to gather data about the baby, anything from due date, gender, possible birth defects, size and if it is a multiple birth. I had one when I was two months along and the size of a barn. I had full- term full- weight twin girls some 7 months later.

So how does this relate to arthritis and joint pain? Well in much lower doses a physiotherapist can conduct the sound waves with a wand onto the area of pain or joints which are in pain. Joints such as knees, ankles, wrists, elbows and shoulders can be treated over time with the sound waves, ultrasound. Once set up on a chair or bed, the client can give himself the ultrasound over the area while the physiotherapist works with others. I had a bone spur in my foot which hurt very badly. I thought my foot was broken but I couldn't think of when or how. I went for x-rays and there it was, a tiny piece of bone at the end of another bone and it grated on other bones when I tried to walk. So I took ultrasound treatments for five sessions and it was gone. The spur broke apart and was blasted into smithereens. No problems since.

Infrasond is based on the other end of the spectrum. Much lower frequencies of sound, so low we cannot hear them but animals can, are conducted into the area of pain. Muscles that were tight and rigid, would become relaxed and finally receive the blood supply they had been denied. Joint pain can be reduced by also introducing the infrasond. Vitality, improved wellness and recuperation after an operation have been attributed to infrasond. In fact, both ultrasound and infrasond have been used in equine medicine. Horses love it! Their joint pain and muscle rigidity are lessened and they are in much better shape. Now small pet owners are asking to have infrasond administered to their animals.

These two types of sound therapy are very useful in actually attacking the cause of the pain and muscle problems. Wellness is a state of mind and, of course, everyone has different opinions and beliefs about pain, the threshold of pain, the use of alternative methods versus medical treatment. Choose what you like and how you want to be treated.

Hot Stone Massage

A relatively new method of massage is based on the use of smooth, small, stones placed on your body. It has come into favor lately as a method of soft massage which does not have to be as intrusive as deep tissue massage. Some people find that deep tissue massage is very wrenching on an already sore and painful body.

The stones are gathered from a rapid running river and are small, the size of an egg and no bigger than the palm of your hand. They are gathered from the river bed as they are smoothed from the rushing water. Then they are placed into a heating oven which heats them throughout. They can also be boiled. The stones are then removed and used by the therapist.

He puts them in his own hands first to make sure they are not too hot. He then puts them on various parts of the back and legs and arms where the joints and muscles are found to be sore, tender and tight. First the body may be oiled to allow the rocks to slide from one spot to another. After a few minutes, the stones are removed and put back in the heater. The therapist then uses his hands and the oil to do a soft massage. The muscles and tendons are already relaxed so the deep tissue massage is not necessary.

He can remove the stones once again and place them on the body or use the stones to help with the massage. They glide over the body due to the oil which also sinks into the skin. The patient is left with the stones on his/her back for a few minutes before being excused.

In my younger day, I remember my osteopath using hot steamed towels in heavy amounts to relax the back and the muscles. I would lie on my stomach and he would come in and place these heavy hot steaming towels all over my back, let me lie there for a while and then come in and remove them. His job was much easier to manipulate my sore joints after a firm massage. I would walk out of there as though I had no spine left and it lasted a good long time.

Massage has its place in the manipulation of the muscles and the spine. It is meant to be a relaxing time with soft music and warm sheets. No one should walk out of a massage therapist's clinic feeling as though they had been pummeled.

Massage Therapy

Massage Therapy has been practiced in all societies since the earliest of time. The laying of hands or manipulation of the soft tissue of the body is a well known and respected form of therapy to assist with the lessening of pain. There are close to one hundred different styles of massage but in all types the therapist may use his/her hands, fingers, knuckles, elbows, forearms and even the feet.

The main intent of massage is to relax the client, apply oils and creams to the back, arms and legs, cover him with towels and warm sheets and to lightly rub and manipulate the body. He will relax the soft tissue, increase the blood flow and the delivery of oxygen to the necessary areas, keep the body warm and help to decrease pain. The main concept is to deliver blood and oxygen to the starved muscle groups, joints and tendons in order to relieve the pain of arthritis and other conditions.

There are so many different types of massage that I cannot do justice to any one method. The Swedish style uses long, hard strokes on the back while twisting the body, the arms and legs to get muscles to move and start to work again. North Americans are probably more familiar with the deep tissue massage where the therapist uses a combination of strokes and deep finger pressure where he can feel the knotted muscle groups that need to be relaxed deep under the skin.

I have had the deep tissue massage and I have felt discomfort because my arthritis is right throughout my body. I cannot relax because I know that every movement is going to mean more pain to my body. Then you have to get up after your treatment and get dressed to leave. I do not find full measure relief in any massage unless I am at home, in bed and I just get a regular back rub. That does me the world of good.

Massage is not just for arthritis pain but is found to be useful in lowering the levels of blood pressure, anxiety and stress. The clinical practice itself is often housed in the same office as a chiropractor as they work co-operatively with each other. One week you might need a chiropractic treatment followed the following week by a massage. Be sure to find a registered massage therapist RMT rather than someone who hangs out a shingle offering massages by the hour.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

