

Alternative Treatments for Arthritis

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What are Some of the Alternative Treatments for Arthritis?

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SAM-e – SAM-e is the abbreviated name for S-adenosylmethionine. This supplement has been studied as an anti-depressant as well as a possible treatment for osteoarthritis. Some studies have shown SAM-e to have some benefit by reducing pain and inflammation, while other studies are inconclusive.

Acupuncture – This procedure originated in China over 2000 years ago and has been used over the centuries to treat many conditions and ailments. While studies on its effectiveness for various conditions have not always been clear, recent studies have shown it to be somewhat effective for osteoarthritis of the knee. If you do decide to give acupuncture a try, make sure you see a licensed acupuncture practitioner.

Magnets – Magnets are often sold in bracelets, shoes, wraps – and even blankets and mattresses – for the treatment of arthritis pain. Some recent studies have shown some effect in reducing arthritis pain, while more numerous other studies show no benefit at all. Magnets can be quite expensive, and should not be used in people who have a pacemaker or other implanted medical devices such as insulin pumps.

Are There Risks to Alternative Treatments?

At the minimum, there is the risk to your pocketbook – you could be spending money on treatments that have proven to be of little or no benefit. Before you decide to try any treatment, please discuss it with your doctor. As mentioned, there may be important and serious interactions with other medications that you may be taking. It is also important to keep in mind that the FDA does not regulate the claims made by these products, nor assure that the bottle contains exactly what is on the label.

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 Unity Hospital
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Alternative Treatments for Arthritis

You've Seen the Ads...

"Miracle cure for Arthritis – call now!"

There are literally thousands of products, foods, and treatments being touted as effective treatments and cures for arthritis. And it's no wonder – after all, arthritis is not really well understood and it affects millions of people around the world. Arthritis can often be unpredictable with periodic flare-ups and "quiet periods," making it difficult for people to determine if a particular treatment or medication is working or if it is a natural remission. In other cases, the placebo effect can be very powerful as patient expectations of a treatment's effectiveness may trigger an improvement. For these and other reasons, it is important for you, your health and your pocketbook to critically examine claims and information about any proposed treatment.

What Exactly is Arthritis?

Arthritis, which literally means "joint inflammation," is really a general term.

There are over 120 different kinds of arthritis, the most common is osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis, often called "wear and tear" arthritis, results when the weight-bearing joints simply begin to wear themselves out.



Another kind of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, is quite different in that it is an autoimmune disease – meaning the body is attacking itself. It is often characterized by inflamed, swollen and painful knuckles and joints. Rheumatoid arthritis can affect the whole body, not just the joints, resulting in fever, weight loss, and fatigue.

There really is no cure for arthritis, and many conventional treatments can be ineffective or have significant side effects, so it is not surprising that many people seek out alternative treatments for relief.

What are "Alternative Treatments?"

The term "alternative treatments" is used to describe treatments that are outside the scope of traditional or established medical science. They typically have not been proven or evaluated in the same way that new medications are. For example, before a new medication can enter the marketplace, it must go through an extensive process involving medical schools, research institutions, numerous studies, and federal regulatory agencies before a claim can be made. Many alternative treatments or therapies have not been through this extensive process.

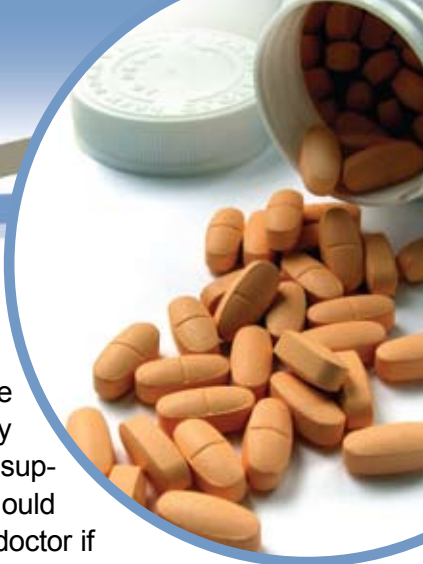
What are Some of the Alternative Treatments for Arthritis?

Glucosamine sulfate – Recent studies have shown it to be of little or no benefit to arthritis sufferers. However, many who take this

supplement swear by it, and most medical experts agree that it is relatively safe. As with all supplements you should still inform your doctor if you plan on taking glucosamine as it may affect blood glucose metabolism. This is especially important if you have diabetes.

Chondroitin sulfate – It is often combined with glucosamine, but not as well studied. Chondroitin is promoted as providing some benefit to the synovial fluid, the fluid that lubricates and nourishes cartilage, though this has not been proven. Again, it is considered relatively safe, though your doctor should be informed if you decide to take it as chondroitin may interact with blood-thinners such as Coumadin.

Shark Cartilage – For many years it was thought that sharks did not get cancer, so many believed that taking shark cartilage would prevent cancer. Shark cartilage has also been touted as an arthritis cure. It turns out that sharks do in fact get cancer, and studies have shown that shark cartilage is ineffective as a cancer fighter or as an arthritis treatment.



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