

## Arthritis

Arthritis can be divided into two main types: osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

### Osteoarthritis

Is caused by chronic degeneration of the cartilage and synovial membrane of the joints. This wear and tear leads to inflammation of the joints resulting in swelling, pain and stiffness. Osteoarthritis rarely develops before the age of forty, but it affects most people after the age of 60. The severity of the symptoms can range from so mild that one doesn't know they have it to causing considerable difficulty with even simple daily activity.

### Rheumatoid arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic inflammatory condition, where cartilage and tissues in and around the joints are damaged or destroyed. It affects the whole body and is an example of an autoimmune disease – a condition whereby the body's immune system attacks the body's own tissue. It creates stiffness, swelling, fatigue, anaemia, weight loss, fever and, often, crippling pain. It frequently occurs in people under forty years of age, including young children.

For both types of arthritis one of the first objectives is to ensure:

**Good body weight:** Excessive weight increases the strain on load-bearing joints, such as hips and knees. Reducing your weight can reduce pain and improve mobility.

### Dietary Advice for Arthritis

#### Aim to increase:

**Sulphur** – eat plenty of foods containing sulphur. These include foods such as onion, garlic and eggs. Sulphur is necessary for the repair and rebuilding of bone, cartilage and connective tissue as well as the absorption of calcium.

**Fresh Pineapple** – the enzyme Bromelain in pineapple is helpful for reducing inflammation.

**Vegetables** – of every colour and especially the green leafy vegetables and non-acidic fruit e.g. apricots, blueberries, nectarines, raspberries, blackberries, gooseberries, mangos, fresh figs, cherries, peaches, plums.

**Wholegrains** – include grains such as spelt, millet, and brown rice.

**Apple Cider Vinegar** - Margaret Hills, a State Registered Nurse, was an authority on apple cider vinegar. She, in turn was influenced by Dr D.C Jarvis, MD. According to Dr. Jarvis and Margaret Hills, apple cider vinegar contains the following minerals: potassium, phosphorus, chlorine, sodium, magnesium, calcium, sulphur, iron and fluorine. Dr. Jarvis felt apple cider vinegar worked because its high potassium content dissolves calcium deposits around the joints. Potassium also promotes the growth of cells and tissues. He believed that the unique combination of high potassium and the other nutrients in apple cider vinegar triggered the healing powers that led to the relief of arthritic pain and increased mobility. In her book, *Cider Vinegar*, Hills emphasises that the most effective apple cider vinegar is pure, organic, unpasteurised apple cider vinegar. Any other type of vinegar (for instance, malt vinegar), is not effective, she claimed.

**Magnesium** – a diet rich in foods containing magnesium from food like apricots, bananas, beans, whole grains, leafy vegetables is beneficial.

**Omega-3** - oily fish such as salmon, mackerel and sardines contain omega-3 fatty acids. These have anti-inflammatory properties, and there is good evidence they can help keep joints supple and flexible, and also help to relieve joint pain and stiffness. Other good sources of omega-3 include flaxseed oil, walnuts, spinach and broccoli.

**Glucosamine & Chondroitin** - these are both building blocks of cartilage and connective tissue which help to repair damaged joints, and may prevent further breakdown. With increasing age our body finds it hard to produce enough levels of glucosamine to keep our joints flexible, so taking a joint care supplement that combines the benefits of glucosamine and essential omega-3s may be helpful.

### **Aim to limit:**

**Solanine** - this is a substance found in nightshade plants including tomatoes, white potatoes, all peppers (excluding black pepper) and aubergine. The theory goes that if not destroyed in the intestine, solanine may be toxic. It was hypothesised by one horticulturalist that some people may not be able to destroy solanine in the gut, leading to solanine absorption and resulting in OA. This theory has not been proven. However, eliminating solanine from the diet has been reported by preliminary research to bring relief to some arthritis sufferers. Proponents state that the exclusion of solanine for up to six months is required before potential effects are seen. They also acknowledge that many arthritis sufferers have not been helped by this approach. It is therefore suggested that long-term trial avoidance of solanine-containing foods may be appropriate only for people with OA who have not responded to other natural treatments.

**Saturated fats** – from animal products and fried foods, these are pro-inflammatory foods

**Table salt (sodium chloride)** – avoid the use of additional salt, use herbs and spices to flavour your foods. It's fine to include the natural sodium found in foods such as celery.

**Additional Iron** – unless you have been diagnosed by your doctor as anaemic, ensure that you are only getting iron from foods (lentils, blackstrap molasses, beetroot etc) and not from supplements. There is some evidence that iron may be involved in pain, swelling and joint destruction.

**Sugar and Alcohol** - try to limit foods such as cakes, biscuits, chocolate and fizzy drinks due to their sugar content. Avoiding alcohol is another beneficial idea as alcohol hampers calcium absorption in the body.

**Phosphorus** - With arthritis, it is important to maintain a low calcium to phosphorus ratio. If phosphorus content is high, more calcium is lost from the body, which will in turn aggravate arthritis problems. Foods rich in phosphorus include red meat, red flesh fish, organ meat such as kidney, liver, processed meat and soft drinks.

**Caffeine** - causes loss of vital minerals and vitamins from the body.