

# **Arthritis Pain & Relief**



**NEED ARTHRTIS RELIEF?**

**10 WAYS TO INSTANTLY  
RELIEVE PAIN + 5 NEW AND  
NATURAL WAYS TO HELP YOUR  
ACHES**

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# **THE TOP TEN WAYS TO GET INSTANT ARTHRITIS PAIN RELIEF**

An estimated 46 million people suffer from the aches and pains of arthritis on a daily basis – and it looks like things are only going to get worse. The CDC is estimating that by the year 2030, more than 67 million people are going to be diagnosed with this painful condition.

For those who are suffering now, relief is here.

## **TRY HOT AND COLD**

You may already utilize hot and cold techniques when you are in pain, but when it comes to arthritis pain, there's nothing that works more quickly or more efficiently than applying different temperatures to the afflicted joints.

The idea behind these two relief techniques is that when you apply heat to an affected area, it can help the muscles and other connective tissue to relax and to release tension. This also reduces the blood flow to the area as your body does not need to warm that body any more with excessive blood circulation.

On the other hand, when you apply cold to an area, you are helping to numb the pain and the aches of that part of your body. And since you are cooling

that part of your body, it actually increases the blood flow to the area as your body responds to an upset in the normal temperature.

There are a number of different ways you can apply heat to a particular joint area or to your body as a whole:

- **Warm baths and showers**

By allowing the body to soak or to be drenched in very warm to hot water, you will begin to feel instant relief. This is especially helpful first thing in the morning when your joints are often at their stiffest and most achy.

- **Jacuzzi tubs**

If you can get in and out of a whirlpool sort of bath, they can be quite helpful and relaxing. Not only are you immersed in hot water, but the jets of the bath can help to knead away any other tension in your body that might contribute to your arthritis pain.

- **Heating pads**

If you have a specific area that you would like to warm up, heating pads are easy to plug in and use anywhere. With different settings, you can customize your heat level to your pain level.

- **Hot water bottles**

Akin to heating pads, these hot water bottles can be placed over your clothing and near the affected area to help control the pain and stiffness.

- **Warm clothing**

To help keep your body warm and relaxed during the day, it can help to wear layers of clothing to hold in body heat. If this begins to be uncomfortable, you can easily remove these layers.

- **Warm bed sheets**

If you want to make your night time pain easier to handle, warm sheets like flannel sheets can help retain body heat.

Things to keep in mind when you use heat:

- Do not use heat therapy for more than 30 minutes at a time.
- Talk with your doctor if you are on any medications.
- Make sure your skin is clean and dry

For some, the application of cold works better to help numb excessive pain as well as to help reduce swelling around the joints, which can also lead to pain.

Here are some ways you can add cold treatments to your life:

- **Use regular ice packs and gel packs**

These first aid treatments can also work well when placed inside a towel and then put on the affected area.

- **Try bags of frozen vegetables**

If you don't have an ice pack around, a bag of frozen peas will work just as well.

- **Use cold water tubs**

Instead of immersing your entire body in an icy bath, dip the affected body part into cooler water.

Things to keep in mind when you use cold:

- Do not use cold treatments for more than 30 minutes at a time.
- Make sure your skin is clean and unbroken
- Never apply cold directly to the skin. Always use a towel or some other item as a barrier.

With either heat or cold therapy, you need to make sure you check your skin afterwards to make sure it's still healthy. If you notice any purpling of your skin that does not go away, or redness that does not diminish, you may need to talk to your doctor about a potential injury.

## **MESSAGE AWAY YOUR STIFFNESS AND PAIN**

Most people don't need to be told twice to go get a massage, so if you've been debating it for your arthritis pain, now's as good a time as any to get on a massage therapist's table.

Massage involves the manipulation of the muscles and connective tissues of the body. With direct pressure and movement of these areas, the patient's body can relax and they can release pain.

Today, there are a number of different kinds of massage from which to choose:

- **Acupressure and shiatsu**

Just like in acupuncture, this massage-like practice uses finger pressure to stimulate certain areas of the body to improve the energy flow and thus reduce pain.

- **Deep tissue massage**

By digging into the muscles of the body, a deep tissue massage will help the body release tension. But keep in mind that this is a very intense massage that often can leave a patient sore in the beginning.

- **Reflexology**

By simply rubbing certain parts of the body, it is thought the practitioner can affect other parts of the body, eliminating aches and pains in some patients. This is the most gentle of the massage practices, so it's good for those who are newer or who are more sensitive.

- **Swedish massage**

While you might not know it by this name, the Swedish massage is the most common method of massage, utilizing long strokes on the skin to help reduce pain and tension.

You may find other types of massage in your local area as well, so make sure you understand what it might entail before you setup your first appointment.

Massage can be used as an instant relief technique when you have the ability to go to a massage therapist when you are feeling pain. Or you can teach your partner or a friend or family member to massage certain parts of your body.

But most arthritis sufferers find that regular massage therapy with a licensed massage therapist offers the most relief. Going for weekly massages seems to not only loosen the muscles and joints, but also can improve flexibility and range of motion.

# **RELAXATION TECHNIQUES TO SOOTHE BODY AND MIND**

A stiff body is often a sign of a 'stiff' mind, it's thought. When we have stressful thoughts and ideas, we can often project this stress into our bodies in the form of muscle tension – not good for those who have troubles with arthritis.

To help release your mind's anxiety and your body's tension, it can help to have a few relaxation techniques on hand for instant relief.

## **DEEP BELLY BREATHING**

Most of us breathe shallowly when we are stressed. Of course, we don't realize it, but it's affecting the way our bodies can and can not relax. When we take shallow breaths, we aren't getting as much oxygen into our bodies and into our bloodstream as possible.

This hinders our body's ability to release tension. To relearn how to breathe deeply, here are the steps you need to take.

- Sit in a comfortable position with your back straight and your chin up.
- Take one hand and place it on your chest.
- Take the other hand and place it on your stomach.
- Try to take breaths that allow the hand on your stomach to rise and to fall. It might feel a little weird to move your stomach in and out, but it gets easier with time.
- Continue to practice this movement until it becomes second nature.

You can practice this deeper breathing no matter where you are and what you're doing. In time, you will begin to breathe this deeply all the time, keeping your body as loose and as limber as possible.

## **DAYDREAMING**

Sometimes relaxation is as easy as reminding yourself of a time when you were feeling less tense. Daydreaming is a simple way for you to remind your inner self of a moment when you weren't feeling any pain.

Simply close your eyes and think about a lovely place you have visited on vacation. Try to think about all of the senses and what they detected when you were there. Do things that you used to do.

Or if you don't have any beautiful vacation spots in your memory, start thinking of a tropical paradise of your own design. The key with daydreaming is simply to let go of the cares of the world and to start thinking about a serene setting.

Other possible daydreams include:

- An exciting sporting experience
- Getting on a TV show
- Becoming rich

For the benefit of your arthritis pain, you owe it to yourself to daydream a little bit.

## **MEDITATION**

Meditation seems to have gotten a bad reputation as something that was for woo-woo New Age people. But while the New Age craze might have popularized meditation, it's actually a practice that has been around for centuries.

Like daydreaming, you take your mind to a place where there is no pain and no stiffness. And as you practice doing so, you can teach your mind to be this still and calm all the time.

Here is a simple way to meditate:

- Find a comfortable spot to sit (laying down often leads to a nap).
- Close your eyes and think about how you are breathing.
- Simply count your inhalation and then your exhalation. *Breathe in One. Breathe out Two.* Continue to count to yourself in this way.

All you are doing is focusing on your breaths, in and out. Whenever another thought comes into your mind, accept that it's there and then try to release it in order to empty your mind once more.

Just 10 minutes a day has been shown to not only help arthritis sufferers reduce pain, but meditation also helps to strengthen the immune system and lower anxiety levels.

Choosing to become a bit more relaxed will help you and your body. You can choose to try all of these techniques or just some – something is better than nothing, after all.

## **FIND YOUR INTERNAL OPTIMIST**

The idea that you simply need to change your attitude is probably not the first thing you think of when your joints begin to ache. After all, arthritis is painful, very painful, so what else can you do but complain about it?

However, each time you complain, you can be doing several things to your body:

- Increasing your tension
- Increasing your blood pressure and heart rate
- Feeling more pain
- Not enjoying the natural painkillers your body makes when you're happy and relaxed

Yes, an optimistic attitude CAN help your arthritis pain.

Here are some tips to turn yourself into an optimist, or someone who just looks on the bright side of things:

- **Think about the good things of each day**  
Either in the morning or in the evening, take some time to think about the good things that happened or will happen. This will help you to recognize that your life is filled with positive things, rather than negative things.
- **Try to find the positive elements in everything**  
Whenever you are out in the world, try to focus on seeing the positives in everything. For example, when a person cuts you off in traffic, change your mind to think about how lucky you were to be safe in that

encounter and think about how that person must really have somewhere to be since they didn't mind your space.

- **Smile more**

Just the act of smiling can help your mood lift and your attitude brighten. Try smiling more to help bring up your spirits no matter how much pain you feel.

- **Focus on what you can do**

It's all too easy for any of us to focus on all the things we can't do in our lives. Instead, make a list of all the things you can do. You might be amazed by how long this list can get.

- **Think about the future**

For many of us, focusing on the future and what *might* happen is getting in the way of our optimism. Think about the future as something that is not only filled with positive events and occurrences, but also as something that we can make positive and productive with the actions we take today.

- **Recognize bad days will pass**

When things do get tough, remind yourself that a bad moment will pass. They always do.

- **Try some affirmations**

Try to find some positive statements you can read to yourself over and over as you are feeling pain. This will help you to refocus your thoughts on the positive and eventually, these affirmations will become your mantras which you will carry wherever you go. Some you can use include: I am strong and healthy. I am free from pain. My body feels great. I am powerful and relaxed.

- **Surround yourself with positive people**

When you surround yourself with positive people, you not only have people to support you, but you will also find it much easier to keep your own spirits up. If you're constantly surrounded by negative people, it can feel like an uphill battle to keep your optimism.

The key to being an optimist is to recognize that there is always another way to look at something in your life. Whether you have a negative thought pattern or a bad day of pain, you can change the way you think and the way you react to the situation.

At first, it might seem like a lot of work, but as with all habits, it just takes time to become the optimist you want to be.

## **DRIVE YOURSELF TO DISTRACTION**

When you have arthritis pain, there are a number of different things you can do in order to alleviate said pain. But one of the most effective methods of relieving pain is simply distracting yourself.

The mind is a powerful healing tool, one which many of us forget to use when our bodies are stiff and our joints are achy.

The moment you begin to feel pain, your brain focuses on it. Your attention becomes diverted to that part of the body and you begin to forget about all other things in your life – it's no wonder the pain becomes so bad.

But while the brain can become hyper-focused on pain, it can be just as easily led to think about not being in pain. Here's how.

- **Watch something**

One of the easiest ways to begin to drive yourself to distraction is to turn your focus onto something else. You might want to pop a movie into your DVD player or begin to watch your favorite TV program. When you do this, you can begin to focus on the characters and their lives, as opposed to your own. If you have regular bouts of pain each day, at more or less specific times, you might want to choose one daily program to watch in order to create a ritual of avoiding the pain you feel.

- **Do something**

Whenever pain begins to hit, start doing something else. This might include anything from knitting to gardening, walking to shopping. Find something else that will occupy your time and your attention in a way that will distract you from the pain. It doesn't really matter what you choose to do as long as you react immediately to the pain to find something else to focus your attention on.

- **Call someone**

An easy way to distract yourself is to call someone else and begin to talk. Of course, within this conversation, try to avoid talking about your pain as that will only increase your chances of feeling more uncomfortable. Talk to a sibling, a parent, or a child to see what they're doing and to begin to relax your body and your pain.

- **Thought stopping**

A traditional psychological technique is thought stopping. This can be practiced in a number of ways. You might want to simply say NO to yourself each time you have a thought about pain, for example. This will begin to teach your brain that pain and NO are associated, which will eventually teach your brain to not think of pain as often. Another

way to go about this practice is to use a rubber band to snap on your wrist each time you begin to think about pain. That way, you stop your thoughts immediately and can change the way you think.

- **Redirection of thinking**

Instead of thinking about your pain, you should try to think about the places in your body that do not hurt. This way, you are always focusing on what's good about your body instead of what's bad about it. While this does take practice, it's just like changing your mindset to be optimistic. Over time, redirecting your thoughts becomes a habit.

- **Push positive words into your mind**

Try to think about positive words and ideas whenever you begin to feel pain. These might be things like: fluffy cats, smiling, children playing, etc. The more you try to think of things that make you feel good, the easier it can be to avoid the things which make you feel bad.

Distracting yourself is one of the best ways to handle pain without the problems of side effects and without needing to call a doctor help you manage the steps of your actions.

With time and with practice, you can easily learn to change the way you think, avoiding pain thoughts altogether. This practice is akin to those who are in a terrible accident, but still have the ability to help others, even though they themselves are in pain. By teaching the brain to focus on something else, you can overcome your own pain or at least the severity of your arthritis symptoms.

## **GET MOVING**

While it seems contradictory to move around more when you're in pain, this is one of the best ways to free your body from pain.

When you try to stay still during a bout of arthritis pain, your body can undergo a few physical changes which affect your experience of pain.

- **Your blood doesn't circulate as much**

You need your blood to circulate in order to bring warmth into the various parts of your body where you want to be able to move freely. When the blood isn't moving, you can feel cold and even stiffer than you actually are.

- **Your muscles stiffen**

If you choose to stay still as you are aching, you will begin to notice you aren't able to move around as well as you once did. Your muscles tighten up and you might feel pain in a sharper way than you have in the past.

- **Your muscles weaken**

When you make it a habit to sit around when you are suffering from arthritis pain, you will begin to lose muscle mass. This will lead to even more muscle weakness, which then perpetuates the cycle of pain, weakness, and stiffness. You need to stay strong in order to keep your body well supported.

- **You aren't distracted**

If you're simply just sitting around, trying not to move, you will begin to focus on your pain and how it affects your life in a negative way. By moving around, you will allow yourself to be distracted from your pain, while also allowing yourself to be in motion, which has its own positive benefits.

No matter what kind of arthritis pain you have, there are exercises you can do in order to create a healthier body and a healthier experience of pain.

Some of the most popular exercises among arthritis sufferers include:

- Water aerobics and swimming
- Walking
- Biking
- Yoga and Tai Chi
- Weight training

Water aerobics and swimming are some of the best exercises for arthritis sufferers because not only are you going to be moving in warm, relaxing water, but the motions are also fluid and controlled, allowing you to move at your own pace. The water helps to reduce the impact on your joints, while also strengthening them and increasing your overall flexibility.

Walking, if your balance isn't compromised, is another way to keep in shape as you are dealing with arthritis pain. Like swimming, this helps your larger joints in your hips and knees, and walking is simple to do just about anywhere.

You might simply want to spend time walking around the grocery store in your neighborhood or perhaps head to the local shopping mall to browse the stores to get moving more.

Biking is another low impact way to get more exercise in your life. By focusing on moving your joints instead of bouncing up and down on the ground, you can help improve flexibility and strength, even if you're using a stationary bike and not heading out on the open road.

Tai Chi and Yoga are other relaxing ways to get more activity while also helping to improve your arthritis pain. By slowly moving your body into certain positions, you can allow your joints to release tension as well as help yourself to become more balanced and coordinated as you move during the rest of your day.

Ideally, you also want to include some sort of weight training exercise into your life as well. This will help to strengthen your muscles and make you feel steadier and sturdier as you perform everyday tasks. The stronger your muscles are, the more easily they can support your weaker muscles, helping to offset pain and tightness.

Your body was designed to be active, even when it is in pain. Of course, if you feel any shooting pains as you move, you will want to stop your activity and speak with your doctor.

If you haven't been able to exercise for a while, it's time to check with your doctor as well to see what exercises they might recommend for you.

## **HOT BATHS FOR LONG NIGHTS**

While you're already aware that heat is a great way to help soothe your arthritis aches, hot baths in particular are powerful ways to relax your body and unclench your joints.

There are a number of ways in which you can utilize your bath time to help your pain. Here are a few 'recipes' to help you get started.

- **Epsom salt bath**

Using Epsom salt you can find in nearly any drugstore or pharmacy, take one cup of the salt and place it into a hot bath tub. Allow the salt to permeate the tub before you step in and begin to soak.

- **Sea salt bath**

Using one cup of organic sea salt, you can follow the same procedure as the Epsom salt. Sea salt is often tolerated better by some patients as it is more balanced with the natural pH of the human body.

- **Lavender bath**

Aromatherapy is also considered a great way to help release tension from the body. Using 5 to 6 drops of lavender essential oil can bring a light and pleasant smell to your bath tub, while also filling your senses with peace and tranquility. You can also add other essential oils to salt baths in order to get as much benefit as possible.

- **Chamomile bath**

Just as chamomile tea can soothe your stomach and your nerves, this tea can also soothe your body. Place a few chamomile tea bags into the hot bath with you, allow the bags to steep for a few minutes, and then remove them before getting into the tub. This will help you to release tension from your muscles, while also bringing you a sensation of calm.

The bath is also a great time to practice a little more distraction from your pain with music.

Music has been used for centuries to help change the mood of the listener. While some people like to use loud music to wake them up, soft music is just as effective in helping your body calm down.

But in the end, it's a matter of preference. You might find, however that using soft, soothing New Age type of music while you soak in the bath is a fantastic way to affect all of your senses at the same time.

When you are taking a hot bath, make sure to only be in the tub for 30 minutes or less as you can begin to lose the heat of the tub, which can then leave you cooler than when you got in. And then your muscles might tight up again in an effort to warm up.

Also, if you are on any medications, check with your doctor before sitting in the tub for extended bath times. Some medications (like those for high blood pressure) can cause you to feel lightheaded when mixed with hot tub temperatures.

As for the temperature your tub should be – as hot as you can stand it, but never enough to burn your skin or cause you pain.

Other ways to make the most of your tub time:

- **Use a bath pillow**

When you support your neck with a rolled up towel behind your neck or a specially designed tub pillow, you will prevent your shoulders from tightening up as you lie in the tub.

- **Light candles**

If you have aromatherapy candles, like lavender or vanilla, lighting them around the tub and turning off the lights in the bathroom can sink you into another world of peaceful bliss.

- **Visualize your pain moving out of your body**

When you're in the tub, close your eyes and picture the pain moving

out of your body and into the water. As the tub drains, think about the pain going down the drain and out of your life.

Regular hot baths can help you whenever you feel pain, but they can also be used to prevent pain from occurring in the first place. By keeping your mind and your body as relaxed as possible, you will find many more pain-free days on the horizon.

## **THE WRITE REMEDY**

Sometimes the best way to relieve pain is not the things we do, but the things we don't do. Too often, people who suffer from arthritis avoid talking about it as they don't want to be a burden to anyone else.

While this is understandable to a certain degree, it seems holding back your feelings is also going to be harmful to your body.

It's been established that those who are more like to hold in their feelings and their anger are also more likely to have troubles with their hearts and with chronic pain. So, it's not a stretch to believe that those suffering from arthritis might also fit into these studies.

One of the best ways to release some of the pressure and some of the anxiety you feel about pain is to write about it on a daily basis.

Start by finding a journal that is comfortable for you to write in, and then make a daily practice of writing about how you feel, what you are doing about it, and writing about anything else that comes to mind.

This will help you express feelings you might be holding inside, while also allowing your brain a chance to work things out on the page.

Here are some ideas to get your writing started:

- **How do I feel about my pain?**

If you begin to look at your pain as though it were a person you were dealing with, you might find it's easier to logically address your feelings and ways to cope with these feelings. Some people have found it helpful to name their pain (Bill, for example) and then talk about 'Bill' as though the pain were someone they simply didn't enjoy being around. This helps to release your tension surrounding the pain without holding it in your muscles and in your gut.

- **What's great about today?**

To try to create positive feelings in your day, start looking for all of the things you are happy about during the span of a day. You can do this either at the end of your day or at the beginning of your days to help boost your confidence and your self-esteem. By always looking for what's so great about each day, you will find more and more positive things to focus your attention on.

- **What are my frustrations?**

While you deal with pain, you might find there are certain things that frustrate you. Don't be afraid to write about them and about why they frustrate you so much. Sometimes, just writing about these things can help you feel better and they can help you begin to understand what you might be feeling achy and even grumpy.

- **What problems do I need to solve?**

One way to begin to feel more in control of your pain and its impact on your life is to write about the problems you might be facing because of

your arthritis. By writing them down, you can begin to find ways to solve these problems in a proactive manner. In many cases, you might not have thought to even solve the problem until you write about it.

- **How is my emotional health right now?**

Since pain can intensify when you are feeling stressed, lonely, or angry, using a journal to write about your emotional health can be helpful in your pain management. By recognizing when you are upset, you can begin to deal with your emotional issues first to see if your pain will subside or become more manageable as a result.

Keep in mind too that your writing is YOUR writing. No one has to read it, so there's no need to censor what you are saying, why you are saying it, etc. All you need to do is to write on a regular basis to begin to see results.

## **STRETCH AWAY THE PAIN**

The surrounding muscles of the tight and aching joints of your body are often more tense than you may realize at first. Over time, you can become accustomed to having your muscles clenched up, so much so your body's stiffness becomes something you expect, something that you don't worry too much about.

But when you are having arthritis pain, that tightness and that stiffness is that last thing you need to have present. You need to loosen things up a bit by taking the time to stretch.

Stretching is something anyone can do anywhere, anytime, and the more you do it, the more benefits you will feel.

Stretching will:

- Improve your flexibility
- Improve your balanced
- Soothe stiffness and tightness
- Help to prevent pain from arthritis

Our bodies were designed to move and to move easily, but when we're sitting down a lot of the time, the muscles clench up from a lack of use. In addition to exercise, stretching needs to become a part of your daily routine.

Stretching also doesn't have to be a lengthy chore in order to give you the results you need. You can spend just a few minutes a day stretching in order to keep your joints and ligaments limber and supple.

Here are some of the easiest stretches you can do:

- **Wrist stretches**

You can be sitting or standing for this stretch. Take one hand and put it out in front of your body as though you are making a 'Stop' sort of gesture. Take the other hand and gently pull back on the fingers of the outstretched hand to feel a pull in the underside of the arm and wrist. Switch sides.

- **Shoulder circles**

To help loosen up your shoulders and neck, put your arms to the side and slowly move your shoulders (not using your arms) around in small

circle patterns. Do this a few times and then reverse the direction of the circles.

- **Backs of the arms**

Take one arm and pull it across your body so that the wrist touches the opposite shoulder. Gently push the elbow of the arm that's across the body to feel a stretch in that back of that arm. Switch sides.

- **Chest stretches**

Take your arms and reach behind yourself to try to hold your hands at the small of your back. With the hands locked and fingers interlaced, slowly lift up your arms to feel your shoulders and chest stretch. Do not try to lift too high, just enough to feel the stretch. Then lower your arms back down slowly.

- **Abdominal stretches**

Lie on your stomach, if possible, and place your arms to your sides, palms on the floor by your ears. Slowly push yourself up through your palms until you begin to feel your abs stretch, slowly lower down. Repeat a few times, controlling your movements by making them as slow as possible.

- **Waist stretch**

Standing up, turn your waist from side to side in order to stretch out the sides of your abdomen. Do this slowly and try to prevent your hips from moving at the same time in order to isolate the waist.

- **Hip stretch**

Sit on the floor, with your legs out in front of you. Take one leg, bend it and place the foot on the opposite side of the other leg's knee. Turn your body to the side of the bent leg so that the opposite elbow is on the opposite knee. Slowly turn back and switch legs.

- **Hamstring stretch**

Standing next to a wall or holding onto a sturdy chair, try to take one leg's foot and pull it to the back of the same leg. Hold it in place, then release and switch legs.

- **Calf stretch**

Stand and face a wall, keeping your legs about 2 feet from the wall itself. Place your hands on the wall and slowly lean in, keeping your legs straight. Slowly push yourself back and repeat.

- **Ankle rolls**

Sitting, slowly roll your ankles to stretch them out, switching directions every now and then.

These stretches do not need to be done all at once, nor do they have to be done each and every day. Stretching, however, is more effective when it is done on a regular basis.

If you're finding these stretches painful, you might want to stand in a hot shower for a few minutes or walk for 5 minutes before starting them. This way, you can give your muscles a chance to warm up and relax before you stretch them out.

As with any exercise program, make sure to check with your doctor before trying these movements out. If you have any history of injuries, you might need to get a different stretching program from your doctor or physical therapist.

Some people find they like to stretch intuitively, simply moving their bodies from one position to the next, pulling on their muscles until they feel them release. This can work well too.

Here are the basic ground rules of stretching:

- Always stretch when you're warmed up
- Never bounce your stretches, just lean into them and slowly release
- Try to work up to 30 seconds per stretch at a time
- Try to work up to at least 2 repetitions per side of the body
- Try to stretch at least every other day for the maximum benefits

If a stretch ever hurts or you hear a snapping sound, call your doctor immediately. While it's difficult to hurt yourself when stretching gently, some people have had troubles overextending their stretches and have injured themselves in the process.

When it's been a long time since you're last stretching experience, it can be helpful to take a guided class at your local community center or fitness club.

## **A TOPICAL SOLUTION**

When arthritis pain starts, you want to stop it as quickly as possible. And though you've learned quite a few tips up to this point, it never hurts to have one more you can rely upon – topical ointments and creams.

By applying direct medication or a soothing substance to your aching joints and bones, you will be able to find instant relief for your pain or, at least, a distraction while you try other pain relief tips as well.

There are two different categories for arthritis topical medications:

- Analgesics
- Counterirritants

Analgesics are medications that penetrate your skin in order to relieve the pain. They might include ingredients like aspirin or acetaminophen in order to soothe the irritation.

These types of ointments also work well to help reduce the inflammation of the joints with the salicylates they include in the actual creams and ointments themselves.

One thing to keep in mind when you are using these types of products is that if you are sensitive to the actual medications orally, you might also experience a reaction when they are applied topically as these ingredients will enter your bloodstream.

Another thing to remember when using topical medications is that when you're already ingesting aspirin or acetaminophen via oral medications, using the creams as well can put you into the overdose levels in your bloodstream.

Take care to not use too much cream if you are already taking aspirin or Tylenol type products for pain relief too. There have been rare cases in which people have suffered liver toxicity or they have died from these kinds of overdoses.

Of course, if you are taking medications of other kinds, it's always a good idea to talk with your doctor or your pharmacist to ensure you're not going to experience any drug interactions. Blood thinners, for example, can also counteract with these types of creams.

The other potential type of ointments and creams are counterirritants. Just like the name implies, these are treatments that irritate the skin – but for a good reason.

When you irritate the skin around the area of pain, you will cause the brain to become confused by the sensations it is feeling. In doing so, you will begin to feel less pain since the body isn't sure what sensation to magnify. Overall, your brain tends to focus on the most recent sensation, so these counterirritants work quite well.

Some of the more popular ones include:

- Oil of wintergreen
- Eucalyptus
- Menthol

These ingredients will cause the skin to feel either hot or cold, depending on the types of ingredients and the length of time the ointment is on. For example, the longer some ingredients are on your skin, the hotter they will feel after an initial sensation of coolness.

Some people, however, are too sensitive to these sorts of treatments. If you feel you already have sensitive skin, you might want to avoid these kinds of therapies as you might have troubles controlling the sensations you feel.

It is best with these treatments to use a little of the product at first before moving onto more that you rub on your skin. See what a little of the cream does before committing a larger patch of skin to the treatment.

These creams can be difficult to remove from the skin once applied.

What's cream about topical ointments is that they are perfect for people who:

- **Want fast pain relief**

Since these creams and ointments are applied to the skin, they are taken into the bloodstream and into the joints much faster than a typical prescription medication can achieve. In just minutes, you can feel relief instead of having to wait for your digestive process to take place.

- **Don't like to swallow pills**

If you're not a person who likes to take pills anyway, the use of creams can help you to still get relief without swallowing a thing.

- **Want targeted pain relief**

When you want to focus your treatment on a certain part of your body, creams and ointments are much easier to use. Sometimes medications can make your entire body feel woozy instead of helping to relieve pain in one particular place.

- **Want something convenient**

Since you can buy these creams and ointments at your local drugstore, you can always have access to the relief you need. Generally inexpensive, these treatments are just what the doctor ordered.

Just like any other drug, let your doctor know if you are trying out these treatments. Keeping them updated on the progress of your own therapy decisions will allow your doctor to make changes and adjustments to our treatment as necessary.

Applying these to the skin is simple, just follow these steps:

- Clean the skin.
- Check for any open wounds, irritation or infections. If your skin isn't healthy, it's not a good idea to apply these reams.
- Use a small amount of the cream and rub directly into the skin.
- Continue to rub until the cream is worked into the skin itself.

Leave on as the package directs and completely rinse off before applying more to the affected area.

# **FIVE NEW NATURAL WAYS TO RELIEVE ARTHRITIS PAIN**

## **CAPSAICIN**

One of the more interesting additions to the arsenal against arthritis pain is something you might have eaten for dinner at some point – capsaicin. Or, it's also commonly known as a chili pepper.

This fiery arthritis reliever works just in the way you think it would – by warming the skin and making the joints and muscles around the area relax. But that's only a part of the process.

What capsaicin does is helped to desensitize the skin as well. Within our skin are receptors to pain that cause us to feel the aches and the throbbing. But when these receptors are desensitized, you can be pain free for months at a time.

The substance P is what is associated with pain in the body. By interfering with or depleting this substance, the brain does not receive messages of pain and so you don't feel the pain.

In one University of Oxford study, it was found that 4 out of 10 arthritis patients were able to reduce their pain by almost half after using capsaicin cream for a month. This is a dramatic difference and it can certainly help arthritis sufferers as well.

In fact, capsaicin has also been recommended for those suffering from neuropathy, from muscle pain, from joint pain, from nerve pain, and from shingles, a painful condition that affects older patients.

Since capsaicin is derived from the chili pepper, there are a few things you'll want to keep in mind as you use it on your body. First of all, just like the chili pepper, it can be quite hot – often too hot for some people's sensitive skin. If you feel your skin might be too sensitive, use a very small dose on a patch of skin near your hand to see what the reaction is.

Just like other topical ointments, capsaicin is easy to find in your local drugstore, making it a favorite among those who don't want to run to their doctor each time they have an ache or a pain.

To use capsaicin, you will want to take a small amount and rub it into the skin where the pain is situated. Immediately after, you should wash your hands of the cream so that you don't feel the burning sensation there too. However, if you want to use this cream on your hands for pain or stiffness, you can – just remove it after a half an hour to ensure you're not transferring the cream to other parts of your body.

Getting the cream in your eye, for example, is quite painful and can necessitate a trip to the hospital in rare cases.

Like the other arthritis ointments, capsaicin should only be applied to clean and healthy skin which is free of cuts or open sores. Getting the cream into these types of skin openings will be painful, more painful than the arthritis itself.

That said, one of the perks of capsaicin is that it doesn't seem to have any known drug interactions. So, you can be taking oral pain medications and still use this cream.

However, it is recommended that you limit the application of capsaicin to no more than 4 times a day.

But unlike the previous sections on instant pain relief, capsaicin is not something to be used in those cases. While some people will find they feel better after the burning sensation, long term relief will still take up to 2 weeks to notice. Be patient, however, and you will find the power of chili peppers is quite effective in your fight against arthritis pain.

Over the counter capsaicin comes in a variety of strengths, so make sure to start with the lowest dosage before moving up to a strong dose. Chances are good the lower dose will be all you need.

## **ARNICA**

While homeopathy still has some ground to gain in relation to the overall medical field, arnica seems to be one of the most respected treatments in relation to arthritis and muscle pain. Whether applied topically or taken orally, this European flower helps to ease the suffering of afflicted patients.

Homeopathy is the practice of using very small amounts of herbs, flowers, and other ingredients in order to stimulate the body's own healing response. It can be likened to the idea of a vaccine in which the dead virus or bacteria is injected into the body in order to persuade the body to make the appropriate white blood cells in order to prevent the disease.

With arnica, this flower is a part of the sunflower family, and the hairy leaves are what has given it its name, derived from the Greek for 'lamb' or 'arna.'

There are several types of arnica, but the most commonly used type is arnica Montana. Within this compound is the chemical helenalin, which is actually toxic when taken in larger amounts. However, when used in very minute measurements, it helps to reduce the inflammation of joints, while also helping to prevent and to heal bruising of the skin.

It is thought too that the roots of the arnica plant contain thymol, which helps to also prevent fungal infections, which might have something to do with preventing the inflammatory reaction. Again, science is still studying how this homeopathic process works.

The main finding of the usefulness of arnica is that it seems to help stimulate the transportation of blood from one part of the body to the affected and afflicted body part. This helps to take away any accumulation of fluids in the joints and in the skin, which allows the body to be free of pain, while also helping to stimulate the natural healing process.

By helping the blood capillaries dilate, the body's blood transport system is much more efficient and a patient can move their joints more easily and without aches and pains.

The actual ingestion of arnica is not recommended, unless it has been prepared by a reputable homeopathic company or practitioner. Those who ingest arnica can have severe stomach upset and even internal bleeding as a result.

Arnica is easy to find in most drugstores, and is found as an ointment that is applied directly to the skin in order to promote the alleviation of pain and swelling.

You can apply this ointment to the skin as often as you like, taking care to wash your hands before moving onto your next task. You will also want to

make sure the skin is clean before applying and that there are no open sores or cracks in the skin that might become irritated by this therapy.

If you choose to use arnica orally, you can find it in small pellets of which you take 3 under the tongue, up to 6 times per day, or as recommended by the manufacturer or the homeopathic practitioner.

While arnica does not seem to interact with any other medications or prescriptions, it is recommended that you alert your doctor when you begin an arnica regimen of any kind.

Overall, arnica is seen to be safe and effective, while also being a gentle way to help your body heal itself as a complementary practice to traditional medicine.

## **SAM-E (S ADENOSYLMETHIONINE)**

It seems each day the number of supplements on the internet and in the supermarkets grows exponentially. Each time one turns on the news, it seems there is another chemical or substance we should be taking into our bodies – like SAM-e.

This chemical is actually a naturally occurring compound found in an amino acid. Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins in our bodies and without them, the human body can not survive.

As a result, it seems logical that adding more amino acids to the body might help to expedite the healing process in some manner. Like many other natural remedies, it seems scientists aren't completely certain why SAM-e works to help with arthritis pain, but the studies are proving its usefulness.

For example, in a study by the University of California at Irvine, researchers found that SAM-e is just as effective as traditional anti-inflammatory drugs like NSAIDs. In just 2 months of using SAM-e, patients found that their arthritis pain was cut in half, something that few other medications can claim to achieve.

There are many different ways SAM-e can be used in relation to the improvement of health. Not only has SAM-e been linked with helping arthritis pain, but it is also being studied for its ability to relieve depression in some patients.

In using SAM-e, it seems the body is able to increase the serotonin and dopamine chemicals in the brain, leading to feelings of well-being and even euphoria. Since the improvement of your mental state is linked with reducing arthritis pain as well, it seems SAM-e is able to address multiple levels of arthritis pain issues.

The main advantage of SAM-e is that it helps with cellular repair and with cellular growth. This can help the body repair damage as well as help to slow down the aging process. Of course, the fountain of youth hasn't been found just yet, but this amino acid compound does seem to have many possibilities in that search for youthful health and vigor.

In order to get the best results from SAM-e, you will need to take this supplement on a regular basis. Research has shown the patients were able to notice less pain, but only after at least 2 weeks of regular supplementation.

You can find SAM-e at your local drugstores and grocery stores, but it helps to use only well known brands in your daily regimen of pills. Also, since SAM-e seems to break down in light, the packaging should be protective of the pills, like foil blister packaging.

Other things to keep in mind when you are purchasing these pills is that they should have a GMP or a USP quality seal to ensure quality, the expiration date should allow for a few years' time, and a stabilizing salt can help to further protect the integrity of the pills.

One special note: since SAM-e does affect moods, if you are on any other medication for depression or for mood stabilization, you need to talk with your doctor first before taking this supplement. It can have adverse effects with a number of other prescriptions.

## **FISH OIL**

It's beginning to seem like fish oil is some sort of panacea for all of the world's problems. From depression to heart health, arthritis pain to lower blood pressure, fish oils have been linked to a number of health issues.

But the usefulness of fish oil for arthritis is a fairly new finding.

When the fish oil is digested and broken down in the body, it becomes chemicals called prostaglandins. These chemicals will reduce inflammation in the body, which then reduces the pain. The body can naturally produce these chemicals as well in certain situations, but in order to alleviate pain, the body needs more than the tissues and organs can provide for day to day functioning.

Derived from the tissues of fish, fish oils are also referred to as Omega-3 fatty acids, DHA, and EPA. All of these labels are correct, and all of these chemicals break down in to the inflammation reducing chemicals the body needs.

In one study in Pennsylvania's University of Pittsburg, patients who took cod liver oil on a regular basis for 10 weeks were able to completely stop taking their traditional pain medications.

What the main problem with fish oil is in relation to pain management is that most patients don't take enough. Though most supplements come in 1000 mg formulations, you need to take at least 4 times as much in order to help your arthritis pain.

Some researchers have recommended taking up to 8000 mg per day for the maximum effectiveness, in fact.

Some patients will have troubles taking fish oil, however, as it is a fish based compound. Since the oil is derived from an actual fish, there can be a fishy aftertaste after taking these pills. This can be avoided when you take the pills after eating a full meal.

There are also some supplements also that have removed the fishy taste or that have added a lemon flavoring in order to help with digestion. Over time, however, your body will become accustomed to taking in these oils and you will not taste the fish at all.

If you find you are sensitive, just try a few different fish oil brands to see if one works better than the other for you.

You can also try to get your fish oil supplementation by trying to eat some fatty fishes more often than you eat red meat or poultry. But the trick with doing this is that you have to eat a lot of actual fish in order to even come close to the amount of Omega fatty acids that you get from the concentrated oils.

In addition, eating a lot of fatty fish can increase your chances of mercury poisoning as fattier fishes tend to accumulate more mercury in their bodies as they move through their environments.

Mercury poisoning does not occur with the fish oil supplements as they are purified and they are 'clean' in terms of outside toxins. Of course, it never hurts to choose a brand that's well known over those that are cheaper and possibly not as well made.

It's recommended that you limit your consumption of fatty fishes to no more than 2 to 3 servings of fish a week – which obviously limits your ability to get the maximum arthritis 'dose.'

If you find you are experiencing symptoms like headaches, a lack of energy, and an overall ill feeling, it might be wise to discontinue your fish oil regimen and talk to your doctor about possibly being tested for mercury poisoning.

Make sure you read the label of the fish oil supplement carefully before making your final purchase. You will want to find capsules that are at least 1000 mg each in order to help you limit the number of pills you have to take.

Omega 6 fatty acids are those which are found in poultry, eggs, and plant based oils. These fatty acids are also good for the heart and also good for those who want to maintain good health. However, they are not as strongly linked with the management of arthritis pain, so fish oil is the preferred remedy.

In fact, scientific studies are showing that ingesting too many plant based Omega 6 fatty acids may actually be affecting our ability to process Omega 3 fatty acids, which is what may be leading to more cases of arthritis to begin with – but right now, it is just speculation and deserves further study.

Once again, if you are taking any other medications, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor about supplementing with fish oils.

## **METHYLSULFONYL-METHANE (MSM)**

MSM is a naturally occurring substance that's found in some plants and foods. Derived from sulfur, the uses of MSM in the supplement world are becoming more and more celebrated with each subsequent study.

What's interesting about MSM is that its primary use in the world is as a solvent. It actually helps to break down substances at high temperatures. Though it's not as good a solvent as water, it does work well in the industrial field, helping to clean and break down other chemicals.

But it's the sulfur derivation that has helped MSM become a part of the health supplementation market. In a study at the University of California at San Diego, MSM was found to help prevent the degeneration of cartilage and of the joints themselves. If this continues to be the finding, the use of MSM could be used to prevent arthritis before it even begins to take hold.

Not only is MSM being linked with the prevention of degeneration, but it's also being linked with the ability to enhance mobility of the joints. This can help a person continue to exercise and to strengthen the surrounding joints and muscles. In doing so, arthritis pain can be reduced even more.

There is some controversy right now about the effectiveness of MSM, so further studies are being done at the moment.

MSM can be taken as a supplement, and is often found to be combined with glucosamine for joint health. Patients can start with a small dose of 1.5 g

and move up to 2 and even 3 g as they become accustomed to the supplement.

You might also find, however, that you can see benefits at much lower dosages – every patient is different.

The main concern with MSM is that it might not be necessary to add to the diet as meat-based diets tend to include plenty of sulfur. But for those who eat less meat and for those who do not eat meat at all, MSM seems to be a wise choice.

As with any of the natural supplements described, the best results come from regular daily use of MSM. The body needs to build up a reserve of the chemicals in order to continue to prevent joint degeneration.

Some patients may experience a slight discomfort the first few times they take MSM, so start with a smaller dose at mealtimes to prevent stomach upset as much as possible.

MSM is readily available online and at local drugstores without a prescription, but your doctor should be alerted when you begin an MSM regimen.

# CONCLUSION

No matter what arthritis treatment you choose, you have many more options than even your doctor may have realized. And with these options comes the power to take charge of your own health and your own pain management process.

While each patient is different, there is a treatment plan for everyone. By using some of these pain relief possibilities, you can experience a life that's less limited and more enjoyable.

Arthritis may be seen as just a condition of getting older, but it doesn't need to be something that stands in the way of your life and of your ability to live your life.

You do have choices – so why not start testing a few out to see what works best for you? Perhaps standard medications aren't the best course of treatment for you – or maybe you simply need these alternatives to complement a regimen your doctor has already started for you.