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**Alleviate Arthritis Pain with Acupuncture**

Arthritis isn't just one disease, but a complex disorder comprised of more than 100 distinct conditions that can affect people at any stage of life. Two of the most common forms are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. While these two forms of arthritis have very different causes, risk factors and effects on the body, they often share a common symptom -- persistent joint pain.



For many people, arthritis pain and inflammation cannot be avoided as the body ages. In fact, most people over the age of 50 show some signs of arthritis as joints naturally degenerate over time. Fortunately, arthritis can often be managed with acupuncture and Oriental medicine.

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis, affecting an estimated 21 million adults in the United States. Beginning with the breakdown of joint cartilage that results in pain and stiffness, osteoarthritis commonly affects the joints of the fingers, knees, hips and spine. Other joints affected less frequently include the wrists, elbows, shoulders and ankles. When osteoarthritis is found in a less frequently affected joint, there is usually a history of injury or unusual stress to that joint. Work-related repetitive injury and physical trauma may contribute to the development of osteoarthritis. If you have a strenuous job that requires repetitive bending, kneeling or squatting, for example, you may be at high risk for osteoarthritis of the knee.

Rheumatoid arthritis can affect many different joints and, in some people, other parts of the body as well, including the blood, lungs and heart. With this form of arthritis, inflammation of the joint lining, called the synovium, can cause pain, stiffness, swelling, warmth and redness. The affected joint may also lose its shape, resulting in loss of normal movement. Rheumatoid arthritis can last a long time and is a disease characterized by flares (active symptoms) and remissions (few to no symptoms).

**Diagnosis and Treatment of Arthritis with Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine**

According to Oriental medical theory, arthritis arises when the cyclical flow of Qi (energy) in the meridians becomes blocked resulting in pain, soreness, numbness and stiffness. This blockage is called "bi syndrome" and is associated with "bi" type pain. It is widely studied and successfully treated using a combination of treatment modalities. The acupuncture points and herbs that are used depend on whether the underlying cause of the blockage of Qi(arthritis) is caused by wind, cold, damp or damp-heat.

**In This Issue**

**Alleviate Arthritis Pain with Acupuncture Studies of Acupuncture for Arthritis Reduce the Impact Anti-Inflammatory Foods**

**Reduce the Impact**



**The Arthritis Foundation recommends the following to reduce the impact of arthritis:**

**Get Active** - Regular physical activity helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles and joints. Tai Chi, a Chinese exercise that strengthens muscles, improves balance and flexibility, promotes relaxation, and has been shown to relieve chronic joint pain.

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine aim to treat the specific symptoms that are unique to each individual using a variety of techniques such as acupuncture, bodywork, lifestyle/dietary recommendations and energetic exercises to restore imbalances found in the body. Therefore, if 10 patients are treated with Oriental medicine for joint pain, each of these 10 patients will receive a unique, customized treatment with different acupuncture points, different herbs/supplements and different lifestyle and diet recommendations.

Your acupuncturist will examine you, take a look at the onset of your condition and learn your signs and symptoms to determine your diagnosis and choose the appropriate acupuncture points and treatment plan.

**Call today to learn how acupuncture and Oriental medicine can be incorporated into your treatment plan for arthritis!**

## Studies of Acupuncture for Arthritis

Several studies have shown that acupuncture can help people with arthritis and related auto-immune diseases.

Scientists found that acupuncture can reduce pain and improve mobility in arthritis patients by 40 percent based on results from a major clinical trial that investigated the ancient Chinese needle treatment. A total of 570 patients aged 50 and older with osteoarthritis of the knee took part in the American study. All had suffered significant pain in their knee the month before joining the trial, but had never experienced acupuncture. By the eighth week, patients receiving genuine acupuncture treatments showed a significant increase in function compared with both the "placebo" treatment and self-help groups. By week 14, they were also experiencing a significant decrease in pain.

In a German study, 3,500 people with osteoarthritis of the hip and/or knee received 15 sessions of acupuncture combined with their usual medical care. The results showed that the patients that received acupuncture had less pain and stiffness, improved joint function and better quality of life than their counterparts who had routine care alone. The improvements occurred immediately after completing a three-month course of acupuncture and lasted for at least another three months, indicating osteoarthritis is among conditions effectively treated with acupuncture.

Another study, published in the journal *Pain*, looked at the effects of acupuncture among 40 adults with osteoarthritis of the knee. Among the patients in the study, those who had a daily acupuncture session for 10 consecutive days reported greater improvement in their pain compared with patients who received a "placebo" version of the therapy.

In one Scandinavian study, 25 percent of arthritis patients who had been scheduled for knee surgery cancelled their operations after acupuncture treatment. In the study, researchers compared acupuncture with advice and exercise for the treatment of osteoarthritis of the hip. Thirty-two patients awaiting a total hip replacement were separated into two groups. One group received one 10-minute and five 25-minute sessions of acupuncture, and the other group received advice and hip exercises over a 6-week period. Patients were assessed for pain and functional ability: Patients in the acupuncture group showed significant improvements, while no significant changes were reported in the group that received advice and exercise therapy. The results of this study indicate that acupuncture is more effective than advice and exercise for the treatment of osteoarthritis of the hip.

### **Control Weight -**

Maintaining an appropriate weight or reducing weight to a recommended level reduces the risk of osteoarthritis. Losing just 10 pounds relieves 40 pounds of pressure on knees. For those living with symptoms, losing 15 pounds can cut knee pain in half.

**Modify Job Tasks -** Try to modify your movements, since repeated use of joints in jobs that require bending and lifting is associated with an increased risk of developing osteoarthritis.

Speak with a health care professional about ways to reduce strain on your joints.

## Anti-Inflammatory Foods

A balanced, varied diet can help ease the pain of arthritis by providing vitamins and minerals that keep your joints healthy. Avoiding "damp" foods such as dairy products and greasy or spicy foods also helps joints.

**Here are some healthy and delicious choices to include in your diet.**

**Ginger -** Ginger is a natural anti-inflammatory. A fresh ginger tea can be made by combining a half teaspoon of grated ginger with 8 ounces of boiling water. Cover and steep for 10 to 15 minutes, strain and add honey to taste.

A University of Maryland School of Medicine study showed that elderly arthritis patients with knee pain due to arthritis improved significantly when acupuncture was added to their treatment. The randomized clinical trial determined whether acupuncture was a clinically safe and effective adjunctive therapy for older patients with osteoarthritis of the knee. The study addressed the addition of acupuncture to conventional therapy to determine if it would provide an added measure of pain relief, if the effects would last beyond treatment and if treatment would have any side effects. Seventy-three patients were randomly divided into two groups. One group received twice-weekly acupuncture treatments and conventional therapy for eight weeks, and the other group received conventional therapy only. Patients who received acupuncture had significant pain relief and showed improvement in function. Those who did not receive acupuncture showed no significant change. No patients reported negative side effects from any acupuncture therapy session.

**Call today to learn more about the benefits of acupuncture and Oriental medicine for arthritis!**

## CANOLA OIL: Is it Healthy?

Those of you who have read my articles (some would say rants!) probably already know the answer to that question. Canola oil is widely touted as one of the "healthy" oils because it contains one of the highest amounts of Omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids are believed to help prevent heart disease. Canola oil is said to be better than olive oil. Olive oil contains no Omega-3s and has more saturated fat than canola.

Canola oil is not a natural oil. There is no canola plant or seed. Canola oil comes from hybridized, genetically modified rapeseed plants. You can begin to see why they call it canola oil. Who would buy rapeseed oil? The name canola is an acronym for "Canadian oil low-acid". Canadian because rapeseed grows well in the cool climate of Canada, and low-acid because the erucic acid content has been genetically modified to be lower in the oils that are sold for human and animal consumption.

Normally rapeseed has a very high content of erucic acid, a particularly nasty fatty acid which has been shown in animal studies to cause serious heart problems. So food scientists have reduced the amount of this acid so it can be sold as a food for humans and animals. Sounds good, right? Ah, no!

A number of studies have evaluated the health effects of consuming canola oil. When fed to lab animals, canola oil causes an increase in blood pressure, promotes insulin resistance (which is a precursor to diabetes Type 2 and some people now think Alzheimer's and dementia), increased risk of stroke, kidney lesions, and premature death.

Because canola oil is composed mostly of monounsaturated fats, it was once thought to be more heat stable for cooking purposes, but studies show it produces free radical mutagenic byproducts just as readily as other vegetable oils used for cooking. Coconut oil, olive oil, ghee, and saturated animal fats like lard are the safest choices for cooking oils.

### **Fresh Pineapple -**

Bromelain, an enzyme in pineapple, reduces inflammation. Be sure the pineapple is fresh, not canned or frozen.

**Cherries -** Recent research has shown that tart cherries are an excellent source of nutrients that may help to reduce joint pain and inflammation related to arthritis.

**Fish -** Cold-water fish such as salmon and mackerel contain omega-3 fatty acids, which help keep joints healthy as well as reduce pain and swelling.

**Turmeric -** A natural anti-inflammatory, it can be used in many food preparations including soups, sauces and salad dressings

The free radicals found in canola oil wreak havoc on the body. Antioxidants are quickly used up defending the body against these rogue molecules. After you eat canola oil, and other polyunsaturated vegetable oils, the body's protective antioxidant reserves are significantly depleted. Animals fed canola oil developed Vitamin E deficiency, despite the fact that their diet contained ample amounts of the vitamin. Vitamin E deficiency can lead to some serious health concerns such as anemia, muscle degeneration and weakness, fibrocystic breast disease, as well as an increased risk of heart disease and cancer.

And there is no such thing as a healthy or safe form of canola oil. Virtually all the canola oil sold in stores or used in the food industry is genetically engineered (GE or GMO). That's why you won't find any canola oil labeled "certified organic". It doesn't really exist. And because GMO crops are more heavily doused with pesticides, your body then has all the toxic fallout from that to deal with as well.

As a customer of Whole Foods, I recently became very concerned about the amount of canola oil that they use in their prepared foods. When I voiced my concerns to the manager of the prepared foods department, I was met with the party line. The manager was either unaware of canola oil's dangers or was stonewalling me. I think Whole Foods uses canola oil in so many of its products because it's inexpensive. The same way most food industry companies do.

I've also become aware that Whole Foods is actively opposing the enactment of new food labeling legislation that would require companies to list on their food product label the ingredients which are GMO. Could this be because so many of their products contain genetically modified ingredients? Sadly, profit margins come before consumer safety in the food industry. Even in stores like Whole Foods. So please read labels carefully when you food shop, and ask questions if you have doubts. Avoid canola oil and all polyunsaturated oils. They all increase heart disease and cancer risk.

GMO foods have not been studied long-term. Altering the genes in foods very likely will negatively affect your health. What is known about GMO foods is that in some cases GMOs can cause sickness and death, and are dangerous to the environment. You can learn more about GMOs at [www.responsibletechnology.org](http://www.responsibletechnology.org).

Please don't be fooled by food industry propaganda that promotes canola oil as a healthy choice. It is definitely not fit for human consumption.

To your continued good health!

David Mortell, Registered Acupuncturist

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