

NO "Rheum" FOR PAIN

Natural relief for
rheumatoid arthritis

by Holly Lucille, ND, RN

Pain. Swelling. Stiffness. If you're one of the 1.3 million Americans living with rheumatoid arthritis, you're no stranger to the uncomfortable symptoms of this painful, progressive disease. The chronic discomfort that is synonymous with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) can significantly reduce your range of motion and mobility, greatly limit physical activity, and have a lasting impact on your overall quality of life.

RA is an autoimmune disease, which means it's triggered when your immune system mistakenly attacks healthy tissues throughout your body. In the case of RA, your immune system causes chronic inflammation in your joints and contributes to the loss of cartilage and the thickening of synovial fluid—the lubricant that keeps joints operating smoothly. RA doesn't just affect your joints, though. It's a systemic disease, which means its impact may spread to other parts of your body, eventually affecting your nerves, skin, lungs, blood vessels, and heart.

DO YOU HAVE RA?

Everyone experiences pain and inflammation from time to time. But for those with RA, the discomfort, swelling, and stiffness can last anywhere from six weeks to a lifetime and usually affect the same joints on both sides of the body. (For example,

if your right wrist is causing you pain, chances are your left wrist will, too.)

Overall, joints become harder to use and are especially painful in the morning. While many people feel stiff and sore upon waking up, those with RA can take several hours before feeling any relief. Other symptoms include warm, red joints and swelling. This is caused by the synovial fluid becoming thicker, making joints puffy and tender. RA often begins in the hands, but can affect any joint throughout the body. You may also feel more tired than usual, experience a loss of appetite, and start noticing signs of depression.

RA has no known cure, but there are a variety of treatment options available to make life more comfortable. Unfortunately, conventional doctors often recommend prescription medications that come with a laundry list of possible side effects, some that are worse than the actual symptoms of the disease.

The good news? Prescription drugs aren't your only option for treatment. It is possible to manage your symptoms with dietary and lifestyle changes. And nature has a number of powerful, scientifically

researched ingredients that have proven to be just as effective as some prescription meds. Best of all, these botanicals address the underlying cause of RA, without unwanted side effects and risk.

NATURAL HEALING

Self-care is absolutely vital for individuals with RA, and doing things to proactively fight inflammation in your body is the first step to improving your quality of life. Now, more than ever, it's important to eat a joint-friendly diet, get regular exercise, and manage your stress levels.

The first thing you should do is adopt an anti-inflammatory diet—which isn't nearly as difficult as some people perceive. Yes, it's important to limit (or eliminate) things like gluten, sugar, trans fats, and processed carbohydrates, but the list of healthy, antioxidant-rich foods that fight inflammation is long—and delicious! Foods that are high in sulfur—like onions, garlic, asparagus, and cabbage—can help repair cartilage and bone. Also, foods that are a part of the Mediterranean diet, like olive oil, leafy greens, and fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids, will also help lower inflammation throughout the body.



Broccoli, cherries, and citrus fruits—among other fruits and vegetables—are also known for their ability to protect joints from free-radical damage.

While you might feel inclined to skip exercise due to pain and stiffness, research shows that moderate exercise will actually reduce the pain and swelling

you experience. It's important to avoid joint-pounding workouts like running or tennis, but incorporating low-impact exercises like swimming, yoga, and cycling into your daily routine can help keep your pain at bay. Exercise is also important to help keep your weight in check, as carrying around extra pounds puts a greater burden on your joints.

3 SUPERSTAR NUTRIENTS

Since pain and inflammation are different for everyone, there's not always a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to relief. Thankfully, nature offers a bounty of natural pain-relievers and anti-inflammatories. Here are some proven favorites:



Curcumin

At the top of the list of effective natural anti-inflammatories is curcumin. When taken in supplement form, this golden-hued “miracle” herb has the amazing ability to suppress cytokines, the substances secreted by the immune system that contribute to inflammation.

Research has shown that curcumin works better than most commonly prescribed NSAID treatments for rheumatoid arthritis. In 45 patients with active RA, results showed that curcumin outperformed the common prescription drug Voltaren in reducing tenderness and the swelling of joints. The participants took just 500 mg of an absorbable form of curcumin known as BCM-95 each day to equal the results of people taking 50 mg of Voltaren. The perk, of course, was that the curcumin caused none of the unwanted side effects associated with the prescription drug. In fact, 14 percent of people in the drug group of this trial had to drop out due to severe side effects, while zero participants dropped out of the curcumin group.



Boswellia

Boswellia is an herb from India that has been used in Ayurvedic medicine for thousands of years for its amazing anti-inflammatory abilities. One of its most unique characteristics is that it's one of the few herbs in nature with the ability to stop 5-LOX inflammation. This hard-to-treat inflammation is the cause of flare-ups in damaged joints. But by modulating the 5-LOX pathway, boswellia actually stops inflammation, rather than just masking its painful symptoms. Boswellia also helps joints heal faster and stops damage from progressing.

Choosing the right boswellia is critical. Like many botanicals, boswellia contains specific compounds that are associated with its beneficial effects. The best boswellia you can take is standardized to have at least 10 percent AKBA, the most anti-inflammatory component in boswellia.



Hemp

The terms “hemp” and “CBD” are often used interchangeably, but technically CBD is a medicinal compound that comes from the stalks and seeds of a type of cannabis plant—usually referred to as hemp. Hemp products are popping up everywhere these days for their ability to provide a variety of health benefits—including pain relief for those with RA.

The cannabinoids in hemp oil have a direct impact on the endocannabinoid system, which is the system responsible for controlling pain in the body. Cannabinoids are natural pain fighters because they have the ability to reduce inflammation and control the brain's response to pain, without causing unwanted side effects.

British research found that patients with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis had elevated levels of endocannabinoids in their synovial tissue—the tissue located between joints—compared to participants without those conditions. It's as though the body floods those particular regions with endocannabinoids in order to relieve the pain. Research has shown that oral use of CBD can manage rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory diseases. ■



Hemp + Curcumin: A POWERFUL COMBINATION

Hemp oil phytocannabinoids are amazing pain-relieving compounds, just like curcuminoids from curcumin. If you're in search of the most powerful combination for pain relief, look for a formula that combines both hemp and curcumin for unparalleled benefits!



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