



THE DOCTOR'S PRESCRIPTION FOR

healthy living

Practical Insights into the World of Natural Healing

Inflammation

Many people are affected by inflammation of the joints and surrounding tendons, ligaments, and cartilage.

Among the oldest known afflictions affecting human beings, joint discomfort can affect virtually every part of the body: from the feet, to the knees, back, shoulders, and fingers.

Improving Joint Mobility with Omega-3 Oils

By Jade Beutler, R.C.P., R.R.T.

Sometimes irritation in the joints is due to the simple wear and tear of age. Other times, it can be caused by an over-active immune system. Still other times, a buildup in the body of uric acid, found in high amounts in animal meats, can create joint discomfort.

It is not uncommon for people to experience more than one type of joint irritation. Regardless, the end result is inflammation, stiffness, and a decrease in mobility.

Omega-3 Oils, Powerful Anti-Inflammatory Agents

Prostaglandins – hormone-like substances produced by the body – regulate the inflammatory response. In a healthy body, anti-inflammatory prostaglandins are produced from dietary ingestion of healthful seed oils such as flaxseed oil, or deep-water fish, both of which have a high content of Omega-3 fatty acids. Pro-inflammatory prostaglandins are produced when foods such as vegetable oils (corn, safflower, and sunflower) and animal meats, which

both contain large amounts of Omega-6 fatty acids are consumed.

Omega-3 oils have been scientifically proven to be powerful anti-inflammatory agents. A high dietary ingestion of Omega-6s can lead to the production of inflammatory prostaglandins, worsening the symptoms of inflammatory conditions. In the past, humans consumed a balance of Omega-3 to Omega-6s. However, over the past 100 years, it is well documented that industrialized nations have switched to a diet that heavily favors pro-inflammatory Omega-6s. In fact, the high prevalence of joint discomfort and other inflammatory conditions might be largely due to the fact that we ingest far too many Omega-6-rich foods and far too few Omega-3-rich ones. For many in the Western world, this means making some fundamental changes to our diet. Several studies have also validated the use of essential fatty acids, such as the Omega-3s in flaxseed oil and fish oil, in relieving joint discomfort and improving joint mobility.

A Natural Approach to Mediating Inflammation

Omega-3 oils do not interfere with prostaglandin metabolism. Instead, they naturally temper the inflammatory prostaglandins which results in a decrease in inflammation. Because of their gentle nature, Omega-3 oils are generally safe and side effect-free.

One benefit of flaxseed oil is that it is relatively inexpensive. Plus, it has proven to benefit as many as 60 other common health conditions. In other words, if you start taking flax oil to relieve your joint discomfort, don't be surprised if you notice other health improvements. Beyond the power of regulating prostaglandins, Omega-3 oils have been found to influence immunity, which may benefit joint inflammation due to an over-active immune system.

Fish Oil or Flax Oil

The difference between flax and fish oils is the type of Omega-3 they provide. Flax oil provides Omega-3 in the form of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA). Fish oil supplies Omega-3 in the form of eicosapentaenoic acid

(EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). While EPA is more active, flaxseed oil is more economical, and ALA from flaxseed oil can be converted to EPA by the body.

A Practical Approach

While the causes of joint discomfort are truly multi-factorial, part of the problem may be attributed to inadequate intake of Omega-3s. Ingestion of foods such as fish and flax oils has been found to increase tissue levels of these valuable Omega-3 oils, as well as favorably influence prostaglandins, thus averting inflammatory conditions.

To control joint inflammation, a practical dietary approach would be to lessen the intake of inflammatory Omega-6 oils, and supplement your diet with anti-inflammatory Omega-3 oils.

Daily supplementation with flaxseed oil — in the amount of 1-2 tablespoons per day — may prove to be an important dietary consideration for those suffering from joint discomfort.

RESEARCH REPORT

Omega-3 Fatty Acids Decrease Inflammation in Joint Discomfort

A study published in the journal, *"Prostaglandins, Leukotrienes and Essential Fatty Acids"* attributed Omega-3 fatty acids' positive effects on the joints to two primary factors.

The first was to modulate the immune system.

The second was to decrease the inflammatory response through the production of prostaglandins.

Based on this evidence, it would be safe to hypothesize that Omega-3 acids could prove beneficial to people with joint inflammation in the following ways:

- Through modulation of the immune system
- Decrease joint inflammation and thus reduce joint discomfort
- Enhance quality of life

Ref:

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Interactions between essential fatty acids, eicosanoids, cytokines, growth factors and free radicals: relevance to new therapeutic strategies in rheumatoid arthritis and collagen vascular diseases. *Prostaglandins Leukotrienes and Essential Fatty Acids*, 1991 Dec., 44(4):201-10.

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