

Putting Out the Fires of Inflammation

IN OSTEOARTHRITIS

by Melissa Lynn Block

Glucosamine's great for arthritis—but but it's not a complete solution.

Imagine coming home from work one day and as you near home, you see smoke rising from somewhere in your neighborhood. Concerned, you drive home as fast as you can, and you see that it's *your* house that's on fire. You stand there, shocked. Fortunately, no one is inside. Now what?

You stand there agape for a minute. Then, you take out your cell phone and call...a carpenter. That's right. You need someone to fix the damage, don't you? Looks like this fire could be just the impetus for that remodel you've been thinking about!

Of course, you know that the first phone call to make if you find your house on fire is the fire department. Once the fire is quenched, you can go in and survey the damage, and bring in experts to see what kinds of repairs are necessary. Calling a carpenter while your house is burning down would be just plain wrong.

Taking only glucosamine sulfate, the highly popular supplement that is used to heal joints damaged by osteoarthritis, to try to remedy painful, inflamed joints is like calling a carpenter when your house is on fire. Glucosamine is a billion-dollar industry, and rightly so, because it's a terrific "carpenter." It has been found to actually help repair damaged joint tissues in people with osteoarthritis. But glucosamine doesn't address the inflammation that is a central element of painful osteoarthritis.

Only about half of the people who try glucosamine for osteoarthritis get the results they want. Even when they do, those results are usually not seen for four to six weeks. Wouldn't it be better to find a way to relieve the inflammation that causes the joint pain in the first place—and then to get that carpenter in there to rebuild the damaged cartilage?

THE ROLE OF INFLAMMATION IN OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis. It's characterized by the breakdown of the spongy, slippery, tough cartilage that lines the joints and helps bone ends slide smoothly over one another.

In osteoarthritis, that cartilage begins to break down—sometimes from overuse and sometimes from simple wear and tear over the years. Small bits and pieces of cartilage can break off within the joint capsule. Eventually, the ends of bones may end up rubbing against one another. Osteoarthritis usually affects the hands, hips, knees and spine, and it may or may not involve inflammation.

Inflammation is the immune system's response to injury or infection. The inflammatory response involves redness, pain, swelling and loss of function. In autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, the immune system—for reasons not well understood—turns on its host, attacking joint tissues.

In some people, arthritic joints don't cause serious pain or inflammation. There are cases where people's joints become extremely degenerated, but there isn't enough inflammation to lead to significant pain. In other cases, even mild joint degeneration is enough to cause terrible discomfort. These differences could be related to the tendency towards inflammation in individual people—something that can vary considerably, due to both genetic and dietary factors.

COUNTERATTACK INFLAMMATION

Rheumatology seemed to turn an important corner with the development of the COX-2 inhibitor medications. Unfortunately, the COX-2 drugs carried a liability that was revealed only after millions had come to rely on them. They significantly increased the risk of heart attack and stroke. It turns out that the COX-2 drugs' extremely targeted approach to reducing the production of pro-inflammatory eicosanoids, hormone-like substances made in virtually every cell of the body by the action of cyclooxygenase (COX) and lipoxygenase (LO) enzymes, had the effect of enhancing inflammation in the blood vessels and the "stickiness" of blood.

What most osteoarthritis patients don't know is that a handful of natural substances have much safer, more balanced eicosanoid-modulating effects.



HERBAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY PHARMACOPOEIA

Holy basil, ginger, turmeric, green tea, oregano, rosemary, Hu zhang, chinese goldthread, barberry, and a traditional Chinese herbal medicine called scullcap all have a long history of use in herbal medicine, and plenty of modern research demonstrates their anti-inflammatory activity. Each of these herbal medicines has an added benefit: a wide range of antioxidant plant chemicals. Inflammation creates an abundance of free radicals, which both damage tissues and accelerate the inflammatory cascade; by introducing high-powered antioxidants into the mix, we help to reduce the damaging effects of inflammation.

- **Holy basil** is a rich source of ursolic acid, a constituent that has demonstrated COX-2 inhibitory activity. It also contains other natural anti-inflammatory and antioxidant substances, including eugenol, rosmarinic acid, and apigenin.



- **Ginger** contains at least 22 plant chemicals that effectively inhibit both 5-LO and COX-2—the enzymes most strongly implicated in joint inflammation. Its balanced inhibitory effect on both these enzymes makes ginger safer for the cardiovascular system than the targeted COX-2 drugs.



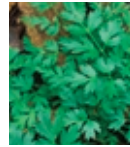
- **Turmeric**, an ancient spice that gives color to curry powder, is a strong inhibitor of COX-2. Its best-known active constituent is curcumin. In laboratory tests, curcumin has anti-inflammatory power that is nearly as potent as that of prescription cortisone medicines—drugs that carry with them some very serious side effects that make them drugs of last resort. Turmeric is also loaded with antioxidants and has significant cancer-preventive actions in the body.



- **Green tea** has received a tremendous amount of press lately for its anti-cancer effects. It contains more anti-inflammatory, antioxidant phytochemicals than any other known food. Epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG) is its best-researched antioxidant/anti-inflammatory ingredient, and it is an effective COX-2 inhibitor.



- Rosemary, oregano, Hu zhang, and scullcap all have demonstrated anti-inflammatory effects in animal and test-tube studies. Combined, they contain dozens of compounds that work synergistically and in a balanced fashion to help reduce inflammation and quench excess free radicals. Hu zhang is a good source of resveratrol, the nutrient found in red wine that protects the cardiovascular system and shows great promise as a natural anti-inflammatory and antioxidant.
- **Chinese goldthread and barberry** are rich in an anti-inflammatory nutrient called berberine—a natural substance that is the subject of over 1,000 medical research papers.



PUT OUT THE FIRE FIRST— THEN BRING IN THE CARPENTER

Because there is little talk about non-pharmacologic solutions for osteoarthritis, many people ignore or refuse to deal with the earliest symptoms of this potentially crippling disease. By the time they seek nutritional or medical help, joints may be so far gone that the muscles around them have atrophied, or they may be in so much pain that their lives are completely changed. But the evidence is clear that the sooner you start to intervene in the progression of osteoarthritis, the better. ■

References available at www.freedompressionline.com.

Support the Health of Your Joints

Holy basil, ginger, turmeric, green tea, oregano, rosemary, Hu zhang, chinese goldthread, barberry, and scullcap are all contained in a nutritional supplement called Zyflamend® (New Chapter, Brattleboro, Vermont). Designed to promote a healthy inflammation response and healthy joint function, you'll have the added benefit of protection against other conditions related to inflammation, including cancer, heart disease and autoimmune disease—and you may be able to substantially reduce your pain with this approach.

The company uses a high-tech supercritical extraction process to create herbal extracts that are highly concentrated, but that preserve the natural balance of beneficial constituents found in the whole plant. This highly complex process reduces as many as 250 pounds of fresh herb to a single pound of extract. And New Chapter does this without the use of harsh solvents, such as hexane or acetone.

For more information or to order Zyflamend click [here](#), or call us toll free at (877) 673-0224.

