

April 2011 is Homeopathy Awareness Month
Homeopathy for Musculoskeletal Health; Freedom from Mobility Restrictions

Joint Pain

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Seventy-nine-year-old Molly rises cautiously from bed each morning, her joints stiff and sore during cold, wet weather. Once she is up and moving, she feels better. In contrast, her elderly companion Jeffrey sometimes suffers attacks of joint pain so excruciating that he refuses to move at all.

The sudden onset of joint inflammation in the elderly, or in the general population, can signal osteoarthritis from joint overuse or rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease in which the body attacks its own tissue.

Many people who suffer the symptoms of arthritis rely on homeopathic remedies to reduce inflammation, ease pain, and repair tissues. Homeopathic remedies have an amazing ability to stimulate the body's natural ability to heal. The key to success with homeopathy, though, is to first identify your arthritis symptoms and then match the remedy to the symptoms. Homeopathic remedies have no side effects, nor do they interact with other medications.

First-Line Remedies

Arnica is the remedy of choice when an arthritis flare-up begins with an injury, such as when lifting boxes during a move or after an unaccustomed hike. The body feels sore and achy and the bed seems unusually hard. When *Arnica* is used at the very beginning of a flare-up, it can help the person who is afraid of being jostled and who feels worse while moving but better with rest.

Bryonia soothes joints that are sharply painful, especially with even slight movement. Lying on the painful side and completely resting the joint temporarily brings relief. If the patient feels cranky, irritable, and just wants to be left alone in misery, choose *Bryonia*.

Rhus toxicodendron is most popular for stiff, painful joints that feel worse on first getting up but feel better with continued movement, just like a stiff, rusty old gate. Also give *Rhus tox* when joints become painful after getting cold and wet or from overuse. Hot baths relieve the pain and stiffness.

Second Most Common Remedies

Apis is most effective when swelling and inflammation are prominent. Made from bee venom, *Apis* heals the joint that is very hot, red, and swollen and that burns or stings. Typically, heat in any form is intolerable, but cool applications relieve.

Ledum is the right choice when the inflammation feels dramatically improved by immersion in a cold bath or by applying cold wraps. Heat in any form—even the warmth of the bed—is intolerable, although the joint itself may feel cold and become numb. The pain may wander, moving up the body from the foot to the knee to the hip and so on.

Ruta helps when stiffness and restlessness are the main signs, but *Rhus tox* doesn't help. *Ruta* is particularly helpful for strains that result from repetitive use. Heat and movement improve the condition.

A few doses of *Rhus tox* were just what Molly needed to relieve her morning stiffness. Jeffrey's acute joint pain became less severe with *Bryonia*.

If you have arthritic joint pain, note your symptoms and then choose the remedy that best characterizes them. In homeopathy we follow the principle that like cures like. Therefore consider your symptoms and, if you cannot find an effective remedy, visit a homeopath who has the experience and knowledge to help you manage arthritis flare-ups.

How Much to Take?

Take 9C potency, two to three times daily for the first three days, then once daily for another one to three weeks, as needed. Always let symptoms guide you: reduce and stop the remedy as symptoms improve.

Foods that Excite Inflammation and Inhibit Calcium Absorption

- Coffee and alcohol
- Excess protein, especially red meat
- Tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, and eggplant

Beneficial Foods

- Raw fruits and vegetables
- Cold-pressed oils, including flax, pumpkin, and evening primrose
- Green, leafy vegetables, especially alfalfa and wheat grass

Other Helpful Hints

- Moderate amounts of sunshine increase vitamin D for calcium absorption
- Be sure to rest during the inflammatory stage
- Maintain a regular, gentle exercise program

Nicole Duelli enjoys sharing her love for homeopathy. She is a certified classical homeopath who trained in Germany as a naturopathic practitioner and practises in Vancouver.

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