

ACTIVATE PHOENIXVILLE with Tina Trager

Tips for arthritis sufferers

I had the pleasure of meeting with someone from the Arthritis Foundation a few days ago, and that discussion was the inspiration for this column. It amazes me that so many people are struggling with this condition, and not just the elderly as most would assume, but people of all ages. I did some digging and wanted to share some information that I felt could be helpful to you or someone you care about with arthritis. I realize that participating in the most common types of exercise may not be an option for individuals with limited joint mobility and/or chronic pain. I also believe that many people are not aware of the role diet can play in either aggravating or relieving symptoms.

The level and occurrence of pain associated with osteoarthritis varies from one individual to the next. Some people may have pain only after repeated use of a particular joint or joints. Others may experience symptoms after prolonged periods of inactivity and moving actually relieves the swelling and stiffness. In either case,

some form of exercise is likely to be very beneficial, but avoiding intense physical activity is also recommended. Losing weight, if one is overweight, will help take the stress off affected joints. For these individuals, eating healthy and moving to the degree one can tolerate is certainly going to be helpful in losing weight and managing the pain.

So, what forms of exercise are best? Swimming is probably the most beneficial, and most widely recommended, as there is no impact whatsoever. It is also helpful in strengthening the muscles of the entire body, which offers support and protection of the joints. However, if you do not have access to a pool, this is not going to work for you! If you do not belong to a fitness facility with a pool, you might want to think about the Phoenixville YMCA. They offer the additional benefit of financial assistance to individuals/families through scholarships. Riding a stationary bike is a very good alternative. You can usually purchase a used

exercise bike for a reasonable price. Some ideas are Web sites such as Craigslist and eBay, or check out ads in the local newspaper, garage sales, and flea markets. Don't be shy about asking friends and family if they have one sitting in their basement! It can either stay there and collect dust (or clothing!), or you can ask to borrow it to improve your quality of life. Strength training with light weights is another good activity worth implementing. Again, the stronger the muscles are surrounding a joint, the less stress the joint will have to bear.

Yoga and Tai-Chi can also be very helpful in keeping the joints moving and bones strong.

Believe it or not, there are certain foods which cause an inflammatory response in the body. And, on the flip side, there are anti-inflammatory foods. I found this on www.drweil.com and thought it was worth

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sharing:

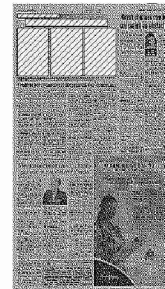
"Dietary changes may help alleviate or reduce the pain associated with osteoarthritis. Research has shown that foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids and the spices ginger and turmeric may help reduce inflammation. Foods rich in antioxidants — plentifully found in most vegetables and fruit — may help reduce tissue damage from inflammation.

- Eat oily fish such as salmon, or try another source of omega-3 fatty acids such as walnuts or freshly ground flax seed daily.

- Regularly use ginger and turmeric. Ginger tea is a good example.

- Eat generous amounts of organically grown vegetables and fruit every day."

The Web site offers the following suggestions for other nutrients/supplements that



may very well be beneficial and worth trying for improved joint health:

• **Glucosamine Sulfate:** Glucosamine sulfate provides the joints with the building blocks they need to help repair the natural wear on cartilage caused by everyday activities. Specifically, glucosamine sulfate provides the raw material needed by the body to manufacture a mucopolysaccharide (called glycosaminoglycan) found in cartilage. Supplemental sources are derived from shellfish. Taken in supplement form, glucosamine may help improve the maintenance of healthy cartilage with an enhanced deposition of glycosaminoglycan.

• **Chondroitin:** Chondroitin protects the cartilage and attracts fluids that give the tissue its shock absorbing quality.

• **Evening primrose oil:** A source of gamma-linolenic acid (GLA) which may help maintain healthy joints.

• **Bone health-related herbs and spices:** Ginger, holy basil, turmeric, green tea, rosemary, scutellaria and huzhang all have naturally occurring anti-inflammatory compounds known as COX-2 inhibitors.

• **Omega-3 fatty acids:** Containing primarily EPA and DHA, which have been shown in studies to help maintain bone health and flexibility.

I hope you find some of these suggestions helpful. I also wanted to let you know about the Arthritis Foundation's Walk, which is held annually, raising awareness and funds.

Please join us for the local walk at 9 a.m. on Saturday, April 25, at Ursinus College, Collegeville. The three-mile run/walk is dog-friendly, so bring your canine pal, get some exercise, and enjoy a fun day while supporting a great cause!

To find out more, or to register, visit www.arthritis.org or visit the **YMCA** or Phoenixville Community Health Foundation to pick up a brochure.