Acute and Chronic Pain

If you are in pain, you are not alone. Millions of Americans suffer every day from painful conditions such as arthritic joints, low back problems, headaches, sports injuries, and other types of illness and trauma. If you are one of these unfortunate people you are probably well aware that the answer to your pain problems can be almost impossible to find. I have spent years researching natural solutions to pain and I believe that there is no better way to safely and effectively relieve both acute and chronic inflammation and pain than by the use of curcumin, boswellia, DL-phenylalanine, and nattokinase.

Inflammation and Pain: The Connection

Inflammation is the beginning of all pain. It is triggered by damage to your body. Typically, when we think of inflammation we think of heat, redness, swelling, and pain. Pain is our warning signal that something is in need of repair. Inflammation and pain are normal and necessary when we have an injury, such as a sprained ankle. Chronic inflammation that lasts and lasts, however, is not normal and is, in fact, a disease. This type of inflammation is at the root of almost all serious illnesses, including cancer, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and painful conditions such as arthritis.

Relieve Inflammation and You Relieve Pain

Inflammation is triggered by the release of hormone-like compounds called prostaglandins, especially PGE2, and is sustained by the inflammatory COX-2 enzyme. If it were possible to inhibit the COX-2 enzyme, it would be possible to control inflammation and possibly even cancer. Did you know that cancer cells are surrounded by an abnormally heavy concentration of COX-2 enzymes?

In fact, many years ago, drug companies found that aspirin inhibited COX-2, and that aspirin users have less cancer. But of course, there is a downside to chronic aspirin use. At the same time it inhibits COX-2, it also inhibits COX-1 which is a protective prostaglandin for the lining of the digestive tract and blood vessels. Therefore, without adequate COX-1 protection, you can have ulcers and leaking of the blood vessels. While aspirin is fine for temporary use, extended use may cause serious side effects and even death. One report has estimated that over 40,000 people die annually from the overuse of drugs in the aspirin family.

Also, consider the “advanced” COX-2 inhibitors Vioxx®, Bextra®, Celebrex®, etc. These drugs did not cause ulcers or weak blood vessels so the expectation was extremely high. Scientists later found that the results experienced were offset by the fact that these anti-inflammatories caused heart attacks and strokes because they induced clots in the blood. The risks were so great that the FDA took Vioxx and Bextra off the market, and now requires a “black box” warning on Celebrex, which is the strongest warning class for prescription drugs.

The natural ingredients I recommend have been traditionally used and clinically studied, and provide the relief you need without side effects or worry. I consider them to be truly advanced pain relieving ingredients.

Natural Inflammation Fighters – Safe, Effective, Fast-Working

Curcumin is a compound from the herb turmeric (Curcuma longa). It is extremely effective in relieving inflammation, which, along with oxidation, is the cause of all chronic disease, including cancer. The curcumin I recommend has also been clinically studied to stop pain, inflammation, and heal joint damage.

One of the studies followed 45 individuals with rheumatoid arthritis, randomized to three groups. Group one received 50 mg of diclofenac sodium twice daily; group two received 500 mg high-absorption curcumin twice daily; and group three received both diclofenac sodium and curcumin. The high-absorption curcumin was more effective that diclofenac sodium at reducing joint pain and swelling. Taking the curcumin with the drug was no more effective than using the botanical alone, and taking the drug alone was less effective. Makes you wonder why effective natural products aren’t the first course of action right away, doesn’t it?

But You Need the RIGHT Natural Ingredients

While curcumin is amazing, the form of curcumin you choose makes all the difference. That’s because not all curcumin extracts are the same, and they don’t all absorb well. In fact, in many of the studies with curcumin, researchers have needed to use very high amounts – up to 12 mg high-absorption curcumin twice daily.

To safely and effectively relieve all types of pain, I recommend curcumin, boswellia, DL-phenylalanine and nattokinase taken one to three times daily.

TERRY’S BOTTOM LINE:

Whether you are faced with acute pain – perhaps due to the effects of exercise or a sports injury – or chronic pain from arthritic joints, powerful natural ingredients can safely and effectively reduce inflammation, stop pain, and return you to your active life.

My favorite natural pain relievers are curcumin and boswellia, along with DL-phenylalanine and nattokinase. Together they:

• Help you stay active
• Inhibit COX-2 and 5-LOX inflammation
• Provide safe and effective relief

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grams daily – in order to maintain therapeutic blood levels that showed a benefit.

Supplement manufacturers have tried to make it easier for the body to use with varying degrees of success. Many standardize their extracts to 95% curcumin, but unfortunately that method alone isn’t very effective.

I believe curcumin gives the best results when it is blended with turmeric essential oil. Not only does turmeric essential oil have significant health benefits in its own right (studies have indicated it may have as potent anti-cancer effects as curcumin), it effectively increases the absorption of curcumin many times over that of plain curcumin extracts.

Because it is absorbed so well, curcumin blended with turmeric essential oil is extremely effective in reducing pain and inflammation. It not only inhibits COX-2, but does it in such a way as not to block it completely since we do need some COX-2 for other body functions. And it does this without any significant side effects! Remember, it isn’t just what you take – it is what you ABSORB that counts.

Curcumin’s Natural Partners – Boswellia and More

Another strong, traditionally used botanical from India that I also recommend in this combination is an extract of boswellia (Boswellia serrata). It works extremely well with curcumin.

It is especially effective and potent at reducing joint pain associated with arthritis by inhibiting the inflammatory enzyme, 5-LOX. This specialized high-AKBA (acetyl-11-keto-β-boswellic acid) boswellia is low in β-boswellic acid (which interferes with beneficial activity) and has higher naturally occurring levels of AKBA to really boost the effectiveness of boswellia.

In a clinical study, boswellia and curcumin were shown to effectively fight osteoarthritis pain. This compared the two botanicals to the generic drug celecoxib (known under the brand name Celebrex®) in individuals with osteoarthritis. One group received 100 mg of celecoxib twice daily, while the second group received a 500 mg blend of the high-absorption curcumin and the high-AKBA, low-beta boswellia extract twice daily.

When it came to relieving pain, 64% of those taking the two-herb combination versus 29% in the drug group improved to such a high degree that they were able to move from having “moderate to severe arthritis” to “mild to moderate arthritis.” Like the RA study, this research shows that the power of a natural pain-fighting botanical was extremely impressive.

Fighting Inflammation, Improving Mood

The pain reliever DLPA (dl-phenylalanine) contains two forms of the amino acid phenylalanine. The “l” form improves mood-elevating chemicals in the brain, such as dopamine, epinephrine and norepinephrine. The “d” form of phenylalanine appears to block a nervous system enzyme (enzyme carboxypeptidase A) that intensifies pain signals. DLPA helps prevent the breakdown of enkephalins, one of the brain’s natural pain-killing substances, which are in the same family as endorphins. DLPA supplements combine the “l” and “d” forms of phenylalanine, which work synergistically to reduce chronic pain and improve mood – two concerns that are interconnected.

Many people confuse DLPA (found abundantly in fish, yogurt and tofu) with aspartame (NutraSweet® or Equal®), which also has the amino acid phenylalanine as an ingredient. These are not the same compounds and do not act in the same way in our body. Aspartame breaks down into an unnatural toxic substance not found in the human diet, which can cause some people to be sick or have migraine headaches. When DLPA breaks down, it converts to tyrosine, which is a precursor to helpful neurotransmitters like dopamine, epinephrine and norepinephrine; melanin, a healthy pigment in the skin; and thyroid hormone. It does not metabolize into toxic substances. There are no health concerns with DLPA causing migraine headaches or other problems.

Nattokinase – Bringing These Ingredients Together

The third natural partner for curcumin is the enzyme nattokinase. This enzyme extract helps to carry the other ingredients through the blood stream so they can get to where they are needed most – including your sore muscles and joints. Nattokinase also helps reduce circulating fibrinogen – a compound that causes stiff muscles and can, over time, actually damage muscle and joint tissue when present in elevated amounts.

Nature’s Best Pain Relievers

Curcumin, boswellia, DLPA and nattokinase are my best recommendation for safely and naturally relieving pain – whether it is the acute pain of a tension headache or for long-term use to treat chronic pain problems. Over and over again I have heard from people who were previously in pain that this combination was the best natural intervention they had ever tried, and that they are now living a pain free life. No matter what type of pain you may suffer from, I can give you no better suggestion than to try these ingredients for yourself. You have nothing to lose but your pain.  

When in doubt, always consult your physician or health care practitioner. This column is to provide you with information to maintain your health.  

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