



# Home remedies for joint pain can provide relief

Stiff, painful joints affect a vast number of people. According to the American College of Rheumatology, arthritis and other rheumatic diseases afflict roughly 23 percent of Americans, while Canadian Health Surveys indicate that nearly 17 percent of the Canadian adult population have arthritis. The number of people living with arthritis is expected to increase as the Baby Boomer generation continues to age.

Treatments for joint pain and stiffness range from medication to physical therapy. Finding the right regimen may take some effort, including some trial and error. For those looking for treatments they can try at home, consider these homespun remedies. (Note: Check with a physician to confirm the safety of alternative treatments before adding herbs to or modifying your existing medications.)

- Exercise more. Regular movement helps to maintain flexibility in the body's joints. Those with joint pain may shy away from exercise, but they could be doing themselves a disservice. Low-impact exercises, like swimming and water aerobics, can work out muscles and joints without adding extra stress. Walking can replace jogging or running, and yoga and pilates may be just the thing for deep stretching.

- Lose weight. Joint pain is often tied to obesity. Losing just a few pounds can ease up strain on certain joints, such as the hips, feet and knees. Shedding weight can improve mobility and decrease pain and potential future damage to joints. Exercise

goes hand-in-hand with healthy eating to lose weight.

- Consider hot and cold therapies. Using a heating pad, hot shower or bath or an ice pack can work wonders on arthritis-related pains. Hot treatments will loosen up stiff joints, while cold therapy is best for acute pain relief. Do not apply hot and cold packs to the skin directly, as this can injure the skin. Wrap them in a towel first before application.

- Include anti-inflammatory foods and beverages in your diet. Explore the many different natural foods and herbs that are purported to reduce inflammation in the body. Ginger, turmeric, flaxseed, grape juice, and bromelain can alleviate inflammation and stiffness. Foods such as fatty fish and nuts high in omega-3 fatty acids also will help fight inflammation. Blueberries, garlic, celery, and kelp should be included in diets as well.

- Go for a massage. The Arthritis Foundation says regular massages can help reduce pain and

stiffness and improve range of motion. The massage therapist should have experience working on people with arthritis. In addition, massages should be performed by licensed physical therapists and guided by a doctor's recommendation.

- Increase magnesium intake. Magnesium can alleviate pain and reduce inflammation. It is best ingested through dark, leafy greens

but also can be taken in supplement form. Magnesium oil can be applied topically to sore joint areas.

Joint pain can impact daily life and make activities less enjoyable. Fortunately, there are plenty of ways that do not require harsh medications to loosen joints and combat pain.



## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Depression Isn't a Part of Aging

While we have to tolerate certain changes while aging, depression isn't one of them. Symptoms can be any of the following: sleeping too little or too much, no interest in favorite activities, inability to concentrate, and feeling hopeless, anxious or very tired. Depression might be part of a serious illness such as diabetes, Parkinson's disease or heart disease, and therefore might not be initially recognized. The key fact to remember is that a person who has depression won't just snap out of it. Help is needed, and a trip to the doctor is the first step. A physician can prescribe antidepressants, which generally work well. (If you're already on antidepressants and have side effects, don't give up. They can fade over time, but do tell your doctor about them.) If the first type doesn't work, there are others your doctor can prescribe until he finds one that

works and at the right dose. A doctor also might suggest psychotherapy, which can help by identifying situations that might have made the depression worse, or even be the cause. If you had depression in your youth, recognize that the impact of depression on seniors is not the same. It can take longer to treat now because seniors are typically given a small dose as a starting point. If you suffer from depression, don't just rely on treatment to make you better. Take steps yourself by doing things you used to enjoy. Talk to a friend or your family about how you feel. Don't do too much; do what you can, with activities broken up into small steps. Hold off making big decisions until later. For more information, go online to [www.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov) and put "depression in seniors" in the search box.

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