

## Joint pain should be controlled not ignored

Many of us assume that joint pain is a normal part of aging and therefore, the pain is likely here to stay. Nothing could be further from the truth, say medical professionals, especially with the advancement in treatment options that include exercise, foods, and alternative dietary supplements.

The first step however is to accurately diagnose the source of your pain. It might surprise you to learn that many people try to ignore it. For example, research data reveals that one in five people say they have chronic pain (such as that caused by arthritis) but nearly half say they don't know what's causing it. Many people wait, hoping the body will heal itself, but that's no remedy. If you do have joint pain, it's important for a doctor to examine you and tell you why.

Treatments range from improving life quality, to medication, to surgery – and preferably in that order. Here are the most important initial steps you can take to control joint pain:

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Experts say that losing as little as 11 pounds can cut the risk of osteoarthritis of the knee by 50 per cent. A healthy body weight reduces the small tears that break down cartilage.
- **Exercise with guidance.** Pain victims often get caught in a vicious cycle: aching joints prevent them from exercising, which in turn causes joints to weaken and deteriorate further. Instead, work with a therapist to develop the right program for you. This will likely include low- or no-impact aerobic exercises (swimming, walking, cycling, dancing) along with a strength building routine, with light weights, plus stretching and relaxation exercises. To manage pain and swelling, apply ice to your joints after exercise.
- **Eat beneficial foods.** Top of the list is fish with omega-3 fatty acids. In addition, research shows that vitamin D may help protect your joints with its anti-inflammatory effect.
- **Wear supportive, comfortable footwear.** Bone experts advise that every shoe should have an extra layer of protective padding.
- **Quit smoking.** Research shows that besides disease, smoking has an effect on both bone health and on an individual's response to treatment.

**Courtesy:** News Canada

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