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Unfortunately common medications used to decrease pain and inflammation can have negative side effects. The typical medications used for pain and inflammation are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs known as NSAIDS (i.e. Aspirin, Advil, Motrin, Ibuprofen, Feldene, Naprosyn, Anaprox, Indocin, Clinoril, Ansaid, Relafen, Daypro & Dolobid), Tylenol and Corticosteroids. Regular use of NSAIDS can cause ulcers and can damage the kidneys and liver while also delaying the healing process, interfering with the repair of bone and the metabolism of articular cartilage. Prolonged use of NSAIDS may actually increase the progression of degenerative arthritis. Extended use of Acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol, can cause liver damage. Corticosteroids (i.e. methylprednisolone [Medrol], prednisone [Deltasone] & dexamethasone [Decadron]) breakdown proteins that form many of the structural components in our body including ligaments, tendons and muscles, they suppress the immune system, and they can lead to hyperglycemia. Side effects of muscle relaxants such as Benzodiazepines (Diazepam or Valium), cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril), carisoprodol (Soma), chlorzoxazone (Paraton Forte), & methocarbamol (Robaxin) are typically drowsiness and ataxia. It is important to note that not everyone experiences these side effects. NSAIDS, analgesics and Corticosteroids can be a very important part of a treatment plan, but there are natural alternatives for those individuals who elect to use them. Natural anti-inflammatory agents & muscle relaxants are listed and discussed below. These therapies are not for everyone and you should discuss their usage with a qualified health care professional.

## **NATURAL THERAPIES**

- **Trypsin**, a pancreatic enzyme, is used in combination with bromelain and rutin used to treat degenerative arthritis. It is used to remove dead tissue that remains after trauma and surgical procedures. This allows the growth of healthy tissues.
- **Chymotrypsin**, a pancreatic enzyme, is used for inflammation due to surgery or trauma injuries.
- **Papain** is an enzyme derived from the fruit papaya. It has anti-inflammatory properties and is used postoperatively or post-traumatically.
- **Bromelain** is an enzyme found in the stems of the pineapple plant. It is used to reduce postoperative and post-traumatic swelling as well as to treat inflammation caused by degenerative arthritis. It has been shown to speed healing of bruises and hematomas as well as to reduce swelling, pain at rest, pain during movement and tenderness after blunt injuries. Administration of bromelain pre-surgically can reduce the average number of days for complete disappearance of pain and inflammation.

- **Rutin** is a flavonoid found in many plants. It is used in combination with bromelain and trypsin to treat degenerative arthritis.
- **Flax Oil** from flax seeds and **Fish Oil** from deep-sea cold-water fish contain omega 3 fatty acids that are anti-inflammatory. Modifying the diet to include flax seeds, deep-sea cold-water fish and/or supplementing with flax oil and/or fish oil encourages the body to go towards a more anti-inflammatory state. These substances work the same way as aspirin and ibuprofen, that is, they block the cyclooxygenase enzyme (cox II inhibitor), but they don't have the same negative side effects such as gastrointestinal upset.
- **Ginger** is a plant used to relieve joint pain and its anti-inflammatory characteristics.
- **Turmeric** is a culinary spice used for its anti-inflammatory and anti-arthritic characteristics.
- **Hops** is a plant used for tenseness and restlessness.
- **Passion Flower** is a plant that has sedative and antispasmodic effects while also relieving pain.
- **Valerian Root** is a plant used to improve the quality of sleep
- **Food** has a tremendous effect on whether the body is in a pro-inflammatory or anti-inflammatory state. Typically, meat, eggs, vegetable oils and a simple carbohydrate diet (high in refined white sugar, white wheat & white rice) promote inflammation while dark green leafy vegetables, fruits and deep sea cold water fish are anti-inflammatory.

## REFERENCES:

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