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Degenerative Arthritis is the most common form of joint disease. It is characterized by the breakdown of articular cartilage, which is located on the surface of our joints and allows them to move freely & smoothly. Once the articular cartilage breaks down, new bone forms in order to stabilize the joint. Degenerative Arthritis is caused by trauma, repetitive joint use, developmental defects, hormonal disorders and unknown factors. It usually occurs in the knees, hips, spine and hands. Symptoms include pain, stiffness and decreased range of motion of the affected joints. Typical treatment is with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), Tylenol and analgesics. Unfortunately, NSAIDs and Tylenol can have side effects such as peptic ulcer and, less commonly, liver or kidney failure. There is also evidence that NSAIDs may even increase the rate of joint destruction if taken on a continuous basis. There are several natural therapies that offer a safe and effective alternative.

### NATURAL THERAPIES

- **Glucosamine** is produced naturally in the body from glucose (sugar). Glucosamine not only helps to produce proteoglycans (substances that hold water and provide structural support to the joint, which enhance flexibility & help resist compressive forces) that are found in articular cartilage, but it helps to prevent their breakdown, therefore, helping to maintain a smooth joint surface. Glucosamine not only plays a role in the formation of articular cartilage, but also helps to make tendons, ligaments, bones as well as other substances in the human body. Multiple studies have shown that glucosamine works as well as NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen, to reduce pain. During the first couple of weeks of treatment, ibuprofen is superior, but after about 4 weeks patients' report less pain with glucosamine. Glucosamine has been used in Russia and Germany for years to treat degenerative arthritis. Glucosamine can be used with NSAIDs and can reportedly reduce the usage of NSAIDs in half. A typical dosage is 500 mg three times per day.
- **Chondroitin Sulfate** occurs naturally in the body and stimulates the production of proteoglycans (substances that hold water and provide structural support to the joint, which enhance flexibility & help resist compressive forces) from mature cartilage cells. Several studies report a decrease in pain, increased range of motion and the possibility of slowed progression of joint degeneration. Patients taking chondroitin sulfate have reported decreased usage of NSAIDs.
- **Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM)** occurs naturally in green plants, certain species of algae, fruits, grains, vegetables and other substances. It is used for chronic pain, arthritis, inflammation as well as other uses.

It is important to note that 84% of products tested by the University of

Maryland School of Pharmacy had less than the labeled amount of glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate actually in the product. It is important that you get these products from a reliable source since the FDA does not regulate supplements.

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