

Ask the EXPERTS

FIGHTING INFLAMMATION...

by Egzona Makolli

What causes joint inflammation and what are the most common signs someone is suffering?

In joint inflammation, the body's defence system triggers an inflammatory response when there are no foreign substances to fight off. Joint inflammation happens when the body's normal protective immune system causes damage to its own tissues and results in inflammation. The most common symptoms are pain, and joint tenderness and stiffness also occurs where the inflamed joint lining tissue has irritated the nerves in the joint capsule. Swelling in the joints is another common symptom with arthritis, which causes restricted movements of the joints in patients. Warm, red skin over the affected joint due to the inflammation can also be a symptom of arthritis.

What impact does our dietary and lifestyle choices have on inflammation?

Foods which are pro-inflammatory, such as refined carbohydrates, sugars, conventional meats, pasteurised dairy and trans-fats, which are present in many processed foods, can cause dietary toxins to build up in the body



and turn the immune system, which can cause inflammation. Many lifestyle choices such as smoking, overuse of alcohol, lack of physical activity and inadequate relief of chronic stress can play a role in the development of inflammation.

What changes should people make, and what supplements can be useful here?

Eat foods which are anti-inflammatory, such as tomatoes, olive oil, green leafy vegetables, nuts such as almonds and walnuts, fatty fish and fruits such as strawberries, blueberries and cherries. Weight control is essential as being overweight or obese can take a toll on your knees and cause arthritis. Exercise should be included as this takes the stress of excess

weight off your joints and also strengthens your muscles around the joints, which prevent them from wear and tear. Omega 3 fatty acid supplement is crucial as they are anti-inflammatory and have been shown to help inflammatory disorders. Vitamin E is a powerful antioxidant, which can protect the joints from damage caused by free radicals; it has also been shown that low levels of vitamin E have been found in people with inflammation. Turmeric has traditionally been used in Chinese and Indian Ayurvedic medicine to help reduce inflammation; scientific studies have shown that a turmeric supplement standardized to 75 per cent curcumin can provide long-term relief, important in pain in individuals suffering from joint related inflammation.



Why are essential fats so necessary as a supplement, and how can I be sure I am taking a quality supplement?

Susie Perrie Debice suggested: Let's face it, fats have had a lot of bad press over the years and many of us are still confused about which fats to eat and which fats to avoid. To put the record straight and make sure that we are all on the same page when it comes to fat facts, here's what you need to know. It's not a good idea to go on a fat free diet since we need fats for our nervous system, brain function, skin health, metabolism and even hormone

balance. It's all about balance; you need to make sure that you have a small intake of saturated fats found in meat, eggs, dairy, coconut, avocado and some nuts and this needs to be balanced out with a much larger intake of unsaturated fats (omega 6 and 3) found in vegetables, nuts, seeds, fish and algae. Why is this balance so important? Well, saturated fats if consumed in excess simply encourage pain and inflammation and help initiate many disease states, whereas unsaturated fats tend to calm down inflammation and help protect the body from many degenerative diseases taking hold.

There are a group of unsaturated fats called essential fatty acids (EFAs), which your body cannot make and therefore must obtain from food. These fats are super important for our wellbeing and tend to be referred to as omega 3s. Unfortunately, many of us still get far too many saturated fats and omega 6 fats in our diet and nowhere near enough of these essential omega 3s. One way to help get your fats back into balance is to supplement with a blend of essential fatty acids. Look for one that contains the right ratio of omega 3 to omega 6 fatty acids and one that's been produced under the right conditions.