

Supplementing Suppleness

by Lisa Marshall

Curcumin: Derived from turmeric (*Curcuma longa*), this bright yellow culinary spice has been used as an anti-inflammatory agent in Asia for centuries. Today, it's used as an alternative to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID), which can wreak havoc on the stomach and kidneys if taken long term, according to Naturopath Casey Seenauth. One industry-sponsored review concluded that 1,000 milligrams (mg) per day of curcumin can rival a NSAID like Advil for relief of pain and inflammation.

Collagen or gelatin: Integrative medicine practitioners have long prescribed gelatin powder made from animal connective tissue to provide the nutrients required for joint regeneration. Supplement makers have developed arthritis-specific collagen supplements in which the gelatin is broken down for better absorption. A Chinese study of 500 rheumatoid arthritis patients found that collagen derived from chicken cartilage improved symptoms of pain, stiffness and swelling in joints. Plant-based options are available.

Glucosamine: This classic tissue-building block has been shown in multiple studies to slow cartilage loss associated with osteoarthritis. Taken long enough, it can also ease pain, says Seenauth. "People often take it, don't feel anything right away and quit. Give it time." He recommends 2,000 mg per day for at least six to eight weeks.

Fish oil: Omega-3 fatty acids like eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) are established anti-inflammatories. A Korean University review of 10 trials involving nearly 400 rheumatoid arthritis patients found that those taking more than three grams per day of omega-3 fatty acid supplements reduced their reliance on NSAIDs and had less pain.

Probiotics: While their impact on pain reduction isn't clearly known, many studies show that certain strains of *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* can boost immune function, repair damaged gut lining and reduce system-aggravating inflammation, says Dr. Susan Blum. She recommends products containing a mixed blend of 20 billion to 30 billion colony-forming units (CFU) per capsule.

