Arthritis: Confronting Chronic Joint Pain

In 1985, it was estimated that 35 million Americans suffered from chronic joint pain. Today over 66 million are suffering — that’s one in three adults.

According to the Arthritis Foundation, arthritis is the most common chronic health problem in the nation and the leading cause of disability in those over age 15. Women suffer from the debilitating condition more often than men. And while it is more common in adults, some 300,000 children also fall victim to this malady. As with any chronic disease, arthritis costs the nation dearly (some $86.2 billion annually).

Most of us think of arthritis as the sole disease affecting the joints, but actually, there are about 100 different diseases related to the joints. No matter the cause, inflammation is at the root of most joint pain. During my medical training, we were taught that there were two basic types of arthritis — inflammatory and degenerative.

Osteoarthritis

This is the most common form of arthritis, affecting some 21 million adults.

The condition can affect just one or many joints. Many cases are the result of repeated trauma to a joint. We see this in athletes such as runners and basketball and football players. Early on, it was thought that the repeated trauma itself caused the joint to degenerate.

But newer studies indicate that many of the changes seen in these joints resemble other forms of inflammatory arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis. The difference between osteoarthritis and the rheumatoid type appears to be more a matter of degree than pathology. Osteoarthritis appears to generate a more smoldering, indolent form of inflammation than rheumatoid arthritis does.

Pathologically, we see a progressive loss of the cartilage, sclerosis
of the underlying bone, changes in the synovial membranes lining the joint and an increase in joint fluid (synovial fluid) with a thinning-out of the fluid. In X-rays, the joint loses its normal space, and the bones around it begin to form bone spurs (osteophytes).

A recent study used high-resolution ultrasound to examine osteoarthritic knees in 71 people and found that all showed varying signs of knee joint inflammation. In the early stages of the disease, inflammatory chemicals (cytokines) were seen to accumulate in the affected joints, and over time the inflammation seemed to burn itself out. By then, the joint was essentially destroyed.

Interestingly, the amount of inflammatory cytokines increased in both the synovial fluid of the joints and the bloodstream. This would explain the high incidence of other diseases in arthritis patients associated with chronic inflammation, such as atherosclerosis, heart attacks and strokes, neurodegenerative diseases (Alzheimer's and Parkinson's) and cancer.

More and more, we are learning that excessive inflammation damages a variety of organs and tissues in the body, leading to a number of chronic diseases. And the reverse is true, as well — chronic inflammation associated with other diseases also can manifest itself as arthritis, as we see with diabetes and lupus.

Recent studies have also shown that disease activity — and therefore severity — are also related to the intensity of the inflammatory reaction. So people with the greatest amount of pain and disability have the highest inflammatory cytokine levels in their joints.

There is also compelling evidence that there is a complex inheritance pattern involved with inflammation — and such an occurrence is what we call a polygenetic disease. This means that numerous genes are involved and there is an interplay between an individual's genetics and things like trauma or even infections.

The primary site of damage is the cartilage of the joint.

Specialized cells called chondrocytes make cartilage. These cells manufacture a complex chemical composed of proteoglycans (a substance that is bound to protein chains and is found within connective tissue) and type II collagen.

Recent studies have shown that when there is a lot of pressure on the joints — like that produced by standing, running and other weight-bearing activities — the chondrocytes generate increasing amounts of destructive free radicals. These, in turn, trigger inflammation. When chondrocytes die, no more cartilage is made, and so the joint deteriorates.

Without cartilage, the ends of the bones begin to rub against each other, causing those near the joint to deteriorate as well. It also causes the bones to produce a buildup of calcium deposits known as bone spurs (osteophytes), which can jab or puncture ligaments, muscles and nerves, causing even more pain and disability.

One common reaction to all inflammatory joint disorders is that the cartilage cells and white blood cells (macrophages and lymphocytes) release destructive enzymes, including harmful matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs) and collagenases.

When more of these enzymes are present in the joint, there is greater destruction and more intense pain. Higher levels of these enzymes are seen in rheumatoid arthritis sufferers than in those with osteoarthritis. A number of plant extracts (flavonoids), grape seed and white tea extracts, DHA oils, natural vitamin E and vitamin E succinate have been shown to suppress these destructive enzymes.

Calcium Crystals in Osteoarthritis

Many newer studies have demonstrated that people with osteoarthritis have a special form of calcium crystal (known as basic calcium phosphate crystals) within the synovial fluid contained inside their diseased joints.

One such analysis found that the presence of these crystals made symptoms worse and enhanced joint destruction by increasing inflammation. And as this occurred, more crystals were formed, creating a vicious cycle of inflammatory destruction.

While there are no studies to prove this, it makes sense that adding magnesium to the diet would reduce calcium crystal formation, since we know it can slash inflammation caused by calcium.
Prevention and Treating Osteoarthritis

Repeated trauma and joint stress, both of which can trigger joint inflammation, are the leading causes of osteoarthritis.

People who have widespread joint involvement probably have a strong predetermination to develop the disease, and it may be triggered by a bad diet, environmental toxins, or infections.

For example, we know that one of the early symptoms of fluoride toxicity is widespread joint pain.

In fact, the destruction of the joints (especially the spine) exactly resembles the breakdown we see with osteoarthritis. With more advanced fluoride poisoning, called skeletal fluorosis, we have seen severe crippling — the result of extensive osteophyte overgrowth, narrowing of the spinal canal (spinal stenosis) and abnormal curvatures of the spine (kyphosis and kyphoscoliosis).

Calcification of ligaments between bones, especially of the spine, can also compress the spinal cord and/or nerves, resulting in paralysis.

Calcification of one particular ligament in the cervical spine is a condition that can be attributed only to fluoride exposure. We know that over several decades, exposure to the doses of fluoride added to water and canned foods produces this degree of osteoarthritis.

Having treated hundreds of cases of spinal stenosis, I have often wondered if the virtual explosion of this disorder is related to widespread water fluoridation.

Like the promotion of polyunsaturated vegetable oils to prevent heart disease, the advocacy of fluoride represents another government policy that may have destroyed the health of millions. Here are some tips for both prevention and treatment:

- **Avoid obesity**
According to the CDC report on arthritis, 66% of adults with doctor-diagnosed arthritis are overweight or obese, and 53% of those not diagnosed by a doctor are in this category. As we have seen with a number of diseases — obesity (especially abdominal obesity) is strongly associated with inflammation, because special fat cells in abdominal fat secrete powerful inflammatory chemicals (cytokines, C-reactive protein, and leptins). Plus, the more weight you have on a joint — especially the hip and knee joints — the greater the likelihood you will develop osteoarthritis.

- **Physical exercise**
Exercise is vital to good health, but the wrong exercise can destroy health. As we age, many of our muscles begin to atrophy from lack of use. This is especially true for leg muscles. Weak muscles lead to increased stress on joints — and for this reason, regular walking is important as a preventative measure, especially as we age. If you have access to a health club or have home equipment, you should do leg-strengthening exercises — especially those that exercise the quadriceps, hamstrings, and muscles of the hip area.

  Damaging exercises include high-impact exercises, aerobics, and jogging long distances, especially on hard surfaces. I prefer walking and the use of cable or free weights. Start with no weight and gradually work up to heavier weights. For the elderly and those with more advanced osteoarthritis, I would suggest avoiding weights and instead use calisthenics. As you improve, you can add some light weights. Regular exercise will not only improve joint stability but will also aid in weight control. Exercise also reduces inflammation.

- **Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.**
Both of these bad habits increase free radical generation and inflammation. Smoking interferes with blood flow to the tissues around the joints, increasing the destruction.

- **Glucosamine-chondroitin sulfate**
Most arthritis sufferers have heard of these two supplements. A number of large-scale, double-blind clinical studies have demonstrated the ability of these supplements to alleviate pain and aid joint reconstruction. In fact, some arthritis experts say they should be a regular part of arthritis treatment. Earlier studies have shown that while anti-inflammatory medications, such as aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS), can reduce pain and joint swelling, they actually accelerate joint destruction. For this reason, experts suggest that glucosamine should always be used in conjunction with medications.

  There is some disagreement about whether chondroitin sulfate improves results, but most agree that glucosamine reduces pain and disability, and in...
Early cases it may even restore joint cartilage.

Early on, it was thought that glucosamine worked because it supplied the building blocks for cartilage construction, but now there is evidence it works by reducing inflammation. Glucosamine is a significant immune suppressant and has been used to treat autoimmune diseases with some success.

It has been demonstrated that the effectiveness of both compounds increases the longer you use it, and it usually takes four to six weeks for benefits to be seen. In severe cases, it may take a year to see significant improvement. We also know that the beneficial effects last four to eight weeks after a patient stops the supplements. This would indicate a combined effect of immune suppression and rebuilding of the joint. The dose is 1,000 mg. three times a day just before a meal.

- **Avoid red meats**
  A diet high in animal protein has been associated with arthritis. This may be caused by two factors:

    Red meats are rich in highly absorbable iron — and iron increases inflammation and free radicals.

    Also, high-protein diets induce acidosis, which worsens bone loss and joint damage. Eat no more than six ounces of chicken, turkey, or pork twice a day.

    Do not take vitamin C with meals, as it will drastically increase iron absorption, even from vegetables. Normally, vegetables (even those high in iron) do not release their iron.

- **Eat five to 10 servings of vegetables a day**
  Vegetables are generally alkaline and will reduce acidity within tissues (such as joints). Also, they contain a number of flavonoids with powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects. Using a blender to puree your vegetables before you eat them will greatly increase absorption and reduce the number of vegetables you need to eat with meals.

- **Avoid vegetable oils**
  Polyunsaturated vegetable oils are known to powerfully stimulate inflammation. These include corn, safflower, sunflower, peanut, canola, and soybean oils. Cook with either extra virgin coconut oil or extra virgin olive oil. Add several dashes of turmeric to the oil to increase antioxidant power.

- **Avoid MSG and other excitotoxins**
  Recent studies have shown that MSG (glutamate) worsens fibromyalgia and may exacerbate all inflammatory conditions. A recently reported study demonstrated that removing MSG and excitotoxins from the diet cured a number of long-term, resistant cases. There are many disguised names for glutamate — hydrolyzed vegetable protein, soy protein and soy isolate, sodium and calcium caseinate, natural flavoring, and even broth.

    Some foods, especially soups, can contain three to four forms of disguised excitotoxins. Even foods with the words "No MSG" on the label can contain these excitotoxins.

**Special Supplements to Repair Joints**

- **Hyaluronic acid**
  The joint contains cartilage composed of complex glycosaminoglycans, which aid in joint health. One product that supplies this vital substance is hyaluronic acid. This is a component of connective tissue whose function is to cushion and lubricate. Some products contain the larger molecular form, which is not absorbed. Pure Encapsulation Company makes a product under this name. It has a lower molecular weight and is well absorbed. The dose is three capsules twice a day with or between meals. You can get Pure Encapsulation products at [www.MyVitaNet.com](http://www.MyVitaNet.com).

- **MSM**
  Also called methyl sulfonyl methane, MSM is a natural form of sulfur found in living organisms. Its main benefits are a reduction of inflammation and the ability to penetrate many tissues, including joints. Recent studies have confirmed its safety, even when used in large doses over prolonged periods of time. The dose is 500 mg. to 1,000 mg. two to three times a day with meals. It is widely available.

- **Collagen type II**
  This is a major component in cartilage, and supplementation has demonstrated benefits in reducing pain and improving joint function. The dose is three capsules twice a day on an empty stomach. It is important that you get a brand made from chicken rather than bovine. You can get this from [www.swansonvitamins.com](http://www.swansonvitamins.com).

- **Tart cherry extract**
  A number of studies have shown that concentrated extracts of tart cherries improve joint function and reduce pain and swelling. You can also get this from...
(www.swansonvitamins.com). The dose is one to two capsules a day.

- **Triple stack**
  This is a special compounded supplement containing full therapeutic doses of MSM, glucosamine, and curcumin. The dose is one capsule three times a day. It should be taken with meals. The best results are seen within three weeks. It can only be found at Specialty Pharmacy (www.specialtyrx.com).

### Special Supplements to Reduce Inflammation

Below I will discuss special plant extracts and vitamins that can reduce inflammation and free radicals within the joint.

- **Curcumin**
  This is one of the most powerful natural anti-inflammatory substances known. Its effects are comparable to steroids, without the harmful effects. All inflammatory arthritis problems arise from the activation of a special inflammation signal molecule in cartilage cells called NFKappaB, or NFKB. Curcumin powerfully inhibits this cell signal and also suppresses the destructive enzymes mentioned above (MMPs and collagenase).

  Curcumin is best absorbed when dissolved in an oil. I would recommend either extra virgin olive oil or fish oil. Fish oil has a significant anti-inflammatory effect all its own, so I would recommend over olive oil. The dose is 250 mg. of curcumin powder mixed with a half-tablespoon of fish oil. Mix well. Take this three times a day with meals.

- **Quercetin**
  This is also a powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant. When combined with curcumin, you get a powerful anti-inflammatory effect because they each act on different inflammatory biochemical pathways. It also suppresses the destructive enzymes I spoke about (MMPs and collagenase).

  Mix 250 mg. of quercetin into oil with the curcumin and take that three times a day.

- **Borage oil**
  Borage oil contains a high concentration of gamma-linolenic acid, which has significant anti-inflammatory properties. It also moisturizes mucous membranes and the skin. You can add this to the mix above. It will come in a gelatin capsule, but don't eat that — just stick a pin into it and squeeze 1,000 mg. into the mentioned mix twice a day. Keep both the fish oil and borage oil in the refrigerator.

- **Natural vitamin E (Unique-E)**
  Vitamin E, in natural form, has significant anti-inflammatory effects. The dose is 1,000 IU a day. Unique-E is the brand I recommend.

- **Buffered vitamin C (calcium/magnesium ascorbate)**
  Vitamin C is not only a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory, but it also strengthens the tissues and the ligaments surrounding the joint.

- **Vitamin/mineral supplement**
  A recent study found that selenium was significantly depleted in the joints of people with arthritis, while copper levels increased. High iron levels were found in the damaged joints of osteoarthritis sufferers. Iron is a powerful generator of inflammation and free radicals. A well-balanced supplement such as Extend Core (www.vrp.com) will deliver all the essential vitamins and minerals.

- **Magnesium citrate or citrate/malate**
  Magnesium supplementation has been shown to reduce inflammation, while a deficiency increases it. It not only slashes free radicals but blocks the release of inflammatory cytokines as well. The dose is two capsules twice a day between meals. A survey found that a dearth of magnesium is one of the most common mineral deficiencies seen, with 75% of the population lacking it. Chronic illness and many medications worsen magnesium loss.

- **Stinging nettle extract**
  This plant extract has been shown to have powerful anti-inflammatory properties. Recent studies have found it to be very protective of the brain as well. It is often included in natural supplements used to treat chronic prostate problems for the same reason. But taking too much can produce a mucous-like diarrhea. I would limit intake to two capsules a day with meals.

  These are the basic steps you will need to follow for good health.

  I have placed an asterisk beside the most important supplements. The closer you follow these steps the more likely you will attain success. It is important to know that curcumin and quercetin can cause your blood sugar to drop slightly. While this is beneficial to those with diabetes, it can be a problem
if you have reactive hypoglycemia. For this reason, always take it with a meal.

**Advanced Joint Destruction**

In the late stages of joint destruction, surgical joint replacement may become necessary.

In 1997, there were 256,000 knee replacements and 117,000 hip replacements associated with arthritis. In such cases, the cartilage has been completely destroyed, the bones are in direct contact and there are extensive bone spurs.

If you must have joint replacement, I suggest that you read my newsletter (No. 6) titled Survive Your Hospital Visit. Having surgery is serious business, and your chances of a good outcome are greatly improved by following a few steps outlined in the newsletter.

If some cartilage is still present, one option is to have hyaluronic acid injected directly into the joint. Several studies have determined that five injections over a week brought rapid relief of pain and lasted about six months or more. The oral product mentioned above would be less beneficial for advanced cases but would be important for prevention and treating early osteoarthritis.

**Rheumatoid Arthritis: The Crippling Effects**

There are about three million people suffering with rheumatoid arthritis — and this form can be terribly crippling, as it creates intense inflammation and free radical generation within a number of joints. In fact, the inflammatory cytokines and free radicals flood the bloodstream and are carried to all parts of the body, including the brain.

The incidence of cancer and atherosclerosis (heart attacks, strokes and peripheral vascular disease) is greatly increased in severe cases of rheumatoid arthritis. Until recently, conventional medicine had little to offer such patients. Dietary studies found that about a third to half of rheumatoid arthritis patients included improved on a pure vegetarian diet. High meat consumption was found to worsen symptoms and increase disability.

One of the real breakthroughs in treatment came after researchers observed that an antibiotic called minocycline cured a significant number of patients — if they stayed on the medication for a year or more. I was intrigued by this finding, and with the aid of a friend of mine who was an infectious disease physician, I treated a patient with the severe, uncontrollable disease.

Of course, I combined the antibiotic with nutritional treatment. In fact, she had improved remarkably with the nutritional treatment alone, but once the minocycline was added, she was cured. Studies using this particular antibiotic helped researchers conclude that rheumatoid arthritis must be an infectious disease — or at least triggered by an infectious organism. While this is logical, it is not entirely correct.

Later researchers learned that several antibiotics had a side effect that was quite useful in inflammatory diseases — they disabled white blood cells responsible for inflammation. In fact, they have since been found to do the same for the brain's inflammatory cells, making these drugs useful in treating neurodegenerative diseases.

Further study has shown that several of the plant flavonoids also have the same effect. For example, curcumin, quercetin, and silymarin (from milk thistle) have the ability to suppress inflammatory white blood cells (macrophages and microglia). In this way, you can get the same beneficial effect of antibiotics like minocycline — but without the dangerous side effects.

Magnesium, fish oils, borage oil, and the other anti-inflammatory supplements mentioned above also work for rheumatoid. But magnesium is especially important, and most doctors — even rheumatologists — don't have a clue. Severe chronic inflammatory disease causes the body to lose a tremendous amount of magnesium. Steroids, often used in treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, also deplete the vital element magnesium.

As mentioned above, magnesium dramatically reduces inflammation, boosts cellular antioxidant defenses and prevents many of the complications of inflammatory arthritis, such as cancer, brain damage, and atherosclerosis.

A number of studies have found that infections might be a possible cause of rheumatoid arthritis. Cultures of joints in some studies have discovered mycoplasma organisms and various viruses, which may trigger the inflammatory reaction. Mycoplasma is a very difficult infection to clear, and this may be part of why minocycline is so useful, as it kills this organism.
Treatment for rheumatoid arthritis — or any inflammatory arthritis (including psoriatic arthritis, lupus-related arthritis and gout) — is the same as outlined above for osteoarthritis. I would add silymarin in a special form called Siliphos, also made by Pure Encapsulation Company. The dose is two capsules twice a day. It not only reduces inflammation but also protects the liver, heart, and brain.

Researchers studying the synovial joint fluid consistently find high levels of inflammatory cytokines, white blood cells (macrophages), and destructive enzymes (MMP, collagenase). They also find high levels of copper within these joints. Copper is a powerful generator of free radicals and inflammation. Taking zinc supplements with each meal (10 mg.) reduces copper absorption. Zinc also strengthens all the tissues around the joints, including ligaments. Destruction of these ligaments is common with rheumatoid arthritis.

Dangers of Treating Inflammatory Arthritis

Medical science has made only one real advance in treatment of severe inflammatory arthritis — a variety of drugs (Embril® and Remicade®) that block one of the predominant inflammatory cytokines, TNF-alpha.

High levels of this inflammatory cytokine are consistently found within the joints of rheumatoid arthritis suffers, and lowering levels can offer dramatic pain relief. We see lesser levels with osteoarthritis.

Unfortunately, there are some deadly complications sometimes associated with these medications, including uncontrollable infections, cancer, and sudden death. Fortunately, a number of natural substances also lower TNF-alpha without such effects. These include curcumin, quercetin, hesperidin, N-acetyl-L-cysteine (NAC), natural vitamin E and vitamin E succinate, GLA, and several herbs (cat's claw and stinging nettle).

One of the methods used to treat these forms of arthritis are drugs that suppress immunity. This was the basis of gold treatments. Other immunosuppressant drugs, such as Imuran® and Methotrexate®, increase the risk of developing cancers and sometimes trigger fatal infections. High doses of steroids also suppress immunity, but they are known to destroy ligaments, joints (especially the hip) and muscle. They also severely deplete magnesium, which makes the disease worse.

One of the common complications I saw in these patients as a practicing neurosurgeon was spontaneous subluxation of the skull on the first cervical vertebra. Here the head literally falls off the top of the cervical spine. This could result in total paralysis.

While the destructive effects of the disease played a major role, more often it was the fact that the steroids patients were on severely weakened the ligaments holding the head in place. Attending doctors never considered using high-dose ascorbate (vitamin C) and zinc to strengthen these ligaments.

Anti-inflammatory medications such as aspirin and NSAIDs (Naprosyn®, Indocin®, Motrin®, etc.) will reduce pain, swelling, and inflammation and do so by blocking key enzymes in the inflammatory process. Unfortunately, they also can have a lot of side effects, including GI bleeding and ulceration, pancreatitis, liver damage, and kidney damage. One of the NSAIDS (a COX-2 Inhibitor) recently dominated the news because it significantly increased heart attack rates and deaths.

Many natural substances block these inflammatory pathways, but without the harmful effects seen with the drugs. Curcumin, quercetin, hesperidin, natural vitamin E (especially gamma-E), apigenin, luteolin, grape seed extract and others block these enzymes. Curcumin and quercetin in combination work most powerfully.

As you have seen, a broad number of natural substances can dramatically reduce all the destructive processes associated with both forms of arthritis. When combined with dietary changes, virtually everyone will improve and many will get well.

Dizziness: Not Always in the Ear

As a practicing neurosurgeon, I used to see a large number of patients battling dizziness or vertigo.

Most had made the rounds, seeing a number of ear-nose-and-throat specialists (ENTs) with little relief. The most common diagnosis was middle ear disease or idiopathic vertigo. These patients would be on a number of medications, most of which left
them, tired and unable to function.

Over the years, I discovered that their problem was in their necks and not their ears. This was true even if they never complained of neck pain or stiffness. In fact, most were surprised when I pushed my fingers deep into their neck muscles in the back and elicited significant pain and dizziness.

I researched this and found that a number of experiments had been done to explain this mechanism. It was determined that if you injected saline deep into these muscles, normal people would experience severe vertigo and dizziness. In fact, they found an entire plexus of nerves that could cause dizziness and vertigo. These were wrapped around the arteries within the cervical spine (vertebral arteries) and connected to these muscles.

Usually, most of these patients were cured with physical therapy. I taught them how to massage their own necks to relieve the problem. A warm towel applied to the back of the neck several times a day also helped.

Because so many people spend hours sitting in front of a computer screen, such problems have literally exploded. My ENT friends are mostly unaware of this connection and often fail to diagnose it. Good posture, neck massages and heat can go a long way in preventing vertigo and saving you money on unnecessary trips to the doctor.

**Relieving Back Pain**

One of the primary conditions treated by neurosurgeons and orthopedists is low back pain. Over years of treating back conditions, I learned that one of the best ways to prevent back problems and even cure a lot of them was proper exercise.

After much research and observation, it became obvious that most people with low back problems had weak muscles around the spine. In fact, one study used an MRI scan to measure the back musculature of people with and without back pain. It consistently found that those with back pains had smaller muscles around the lower spine.

I found two very effective exercises to reduce back pains.

One is to do leg lifts with the knees slightly bent. First, lie on the floor, place a pillow under your buttocks and slowly lift your legs to a vertical position. Do this for about 10 reps to start, and work up to 20 or 30 after that. You should do at least 10 reps a day and try to work up to three sets of 10 reps.

The second exercise is a little more involved. The MRI study I quoted herein found that the lumbar muscles — those around the back of the spine — were the most atrophied. To strengthen these muscle, you must do back-extension exercises. If you belong to a gym, this is no problem. If not, you can lean your hips against a table, bend forward as far as you can and then slowly straighten up. Do this at least 10 times. The more you do, the better. You should do them several times a day.

Good nutrition dramatically enhances the effectiveness of these exercises. For good lumbar and cervical disc health it is most important to add vitamins C, E, zinc, and curcumin daily. Fish oils and borage oil will keep the joints lubricated and prevent inflammation.

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**Medical and Nutritional Briefs**

**More Bad News for Statins**

Almost daily, we are assaulted by Crestor® advertisements extolling the power of this drug to prevent heart attacks and strokes.

As I have outlined in previous newsletters, this is mostly hokum. In fact, their own ads sneak in the truth. For example, one recently appeared in an issue of Woman's Day, “Crestor is prescribed, along with diet, for lowering high cholesterol and has not been determined to prevent heart disease, heart attacks, or strokes.”

The reason they include this in their ads is because they were forced to do so by the government. The government is correct. No study shows any significant reduction in heart attack incidence in people with high cholesterol alone. And there is compelling evidence, from the largest studies performed, that prevention of heart attacks
is not related to the degree to which cholesterol is lowered — even LDL cholesterol.

Likewise, selected nutrients and diet have been shown to dramatically reduce the risk of heart attacks and heart attack deaths, far greater than any dose of statin drug.

For example, following the Mediterranean diet alone was shown to reduce risk by 76%, and a combination of vitamin C and natural E almost slashed it by 60%. That is two to three times better than the highest dose of statins — and these aren't even the most powerful natural weapons.

More important is that statins are associated with a high cancer risk, progression of cataracts, hepatitis, pancreatitis, testicular atrophy, erectile dysfunction, memory loss, psychic effects, and peripheral neuropathy. In fact, a new study that examined a large number of people taking various statin drugs found that risk of developing a peripheral neuropathy increased from four to 14 times. (Neurology: 2001; 58: 1333-1337.)

So what is peripheral neuropathy? It is a slow degeneration of the nerves in the arms and legs that leads to numbness, burning, tingling, and severe weakness. In fact, the type of nerve damage found with statin use was a sensorimotor type, which means it causes a combination of sensory loss and weakness. The real concern was the finding that those who took statin drugs over two years dramatically increased their risk.

With the pushers of statin cholesterol-lowering drugs now suggesting even that higher doses be used — and earlier in life (even in childhood) — the risk of such complications will rise even more. With all the safe alternatives, these medications should not be necessary.

Where Are the Germs Hiding?

Those of us who have been trained in infectious diseases and microbiology are aware of the risks of people's everyday habits, such as eating after others, putting pens and pencils in their mouths and not washing their hands after using the facilities.

One of the things that upsets me most is to see a baby drop its pacifier on the floor of a restaurant and have the mother pick it up and put it back in the baby's mouth. And they wonder why children get meningitis. It's as if they are not aware that dozens of people have walked on those floors after leaving the bathroom.

I have also seen mothers change diapers, only to later put their finger in the baby's mouth as a pacifier. They also let their babies eat off dirty tabletops in restaurants. It's enough to make you scream. A number of studies have shown that sharing toys and pacifiers in daycare centers is a leading cause of hemophilis influenza meningitis epidemics. Instead of commonsense hygiene, we vaccinate every child.

A recent study conducted by Dr. Charles Gerba of the Microbiology Department at Arizona States University found that despite what we think, it is not doorknobs and public toilets that are the greatest risk. Rather, it is computer keyboards, desktops and sinks. Another study found high levels of pathogenic disease-causing bacteria on children's toys, kitchen tables, and countertops.

To prevent these deadly childhood diseases, frequent hand washing is important for the mother and child. Commercial sanitary hand wipes make sterilization much easier. Countertops, tables, toys and other frequently used areas and items should be cleaned regularly with a safe antiseptic. I often see babies crawling around on their hands for hours, and their mothers never bother to wash the children's hands. Invariably, the baby will put hands or fingers in his or her mouth.

I often tell mothers: Would you crawl around on the floor on your hands and then stick them into your mouth? Most think that is gross. It's also disgusting and unhealthy for a baby.

Continued on Page10
**Ask Dr. Blaylock**

**Attention Blaylock Readers:**

Dr. Blaylock welcomes any questions or comments you would like to share.

Each month, he will select a few to be published and answered in the newsletter. Please e-mail the doctor at: askblaylock@newsmax.com

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**Q:** Along with my multi-vitamin and mineral, I also take alpha lipoic acid, grape seed extract, quercetin, and bromelain. I know that some of these supplements are blood thinners as well as the C and E in my multivitamin. I want to take as many antioxidants as possible but am concerned that I might be thinning my blood too much. Are there general guidelines that can be followed to achieve a balance?

—Sharon K., Orlando, Fla.

**A:** While some of these supplements are associated with blood thinning, in most studies either it was insignificant or only at extremely high doses. My book, "Health and Nutrition Secrets", reviews a number of these studies, especially vitamin E, demonstrating little danger, unless you are taking other blood thinners, such as aspirin or prescription blood thinners. Ginkgo biloba, which gets a lot of media attention, in fact at the higher dosage is equal to taking one to two aspirin a day in terms of anti-coagulation. This makes it excellent in preventing heart attacks and strokes.

**Q:** My daughter (18 years old) recently had unusual back, hip, and leg pain. The pain in the leg progressed to a numbness or as she likened it more closely to the feeling of a leg that was asleep. She began to drag the left leg when walking.

Soon she was confined to a wheelchair and could not walk at all.

Two MRIs, a brain scan, and four days in the hospital for intravenous steroid (Solumedrol) treatment and we have a fuzzy diagnosis of transverse myelitis?

Can you suggest any treatment that will hasten the recovery of and the use of the leg?

Best regards and thank you for your very helpful newsletter.

—Dan Vest

**A:** It would be best if the doctors could make a definitive diagnosis, but if that is not possible, a number of studies have shown that the following supplements promote nerve repair and even promote spinal cord injury improvement. First, it is important to avoid things known to harm injured nerves, such as a high intake of omega-6 oils (vegetable oils), excitotoxins (MSG, aspartame and other hidden forms), fluoride, exposure to mercury, lead, and cadmium and a high intake of sugar.

A number of supplements promote nerve healing, such as acetyl-L-carnitine, alpha-lipoic acid, CoQ10, the B vitamins (especially B1, B6, folate and B12 (as 5000 ug a day of methylcobalamin), vitamin C (as magnesium ascorbate), natural vitamin E and the minerals, chromium, selenium, zinc, and magnesium.

Curcumin (dissolved in extra virgin olive oil or fish oil), quercetin and white tea all protect the nerves and spinal cord from damage of any type. In combination they are more effective. DHA (a component of omega-3 fish oils), is also critical for nerve and spinal cord repair. Vitamin D-3 is important, especially should this turn out to be MS, since it has been shown to reduce inflammation of nerves and nerve pathways.

You have warned about soy, and soy by-products such as MSG. I have recently been shopping at whole foods and noticed that many of their packaged foods include “soy oil.” Is this dangerous as well?

—Margaret E., Texas

**A:** Yes, soy oil is also harmful, since it is an omega-6 oil, which increases inflammation, suppresses immunity, promotes tumor growth, worsens atherosclerosis, and increases the risk of neurodegenerative diseases. It does not contain excitotoxins, such as glutamate, cysteine or aspartate. I would recommend using either extra virgin olive oil or extra virgin coconut oil for cooking and the former for salad dressing and use on foods. You should also supplement with a high-purity omega-3 oil.
About Dr. Blaylock

Dr. Russell Blaylock edits NewsMax.com's Blaylock Wellness Report. He is a nationally recognized board-certified neurosurgeon, health practitioner, author and lecturer.

He attended the Louisiana State University School of Medicine in New Orleans and completed his internship and neurosurgical residency at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, S.C.

For the past 26 years, he has practiced neurosurgery in addition to having a nutritional practice.

He recently retired from his neurosurgical duties to devote his full attention to nutritional studies and research. Dr. Blaylock has authored three books on nutrition and wellness, including Excitotoxins: The Taste That Kills, Health and Nutrition Secrets That Can Save Your Life and his most recent work, Natural Strategies for The Cancer Patient. An in-demand guest for radio and television programs, he lectures extensively to both lay and professional medical audiences on a variety of nutrition-related subjects.

Dr. Blaylock is a member of the international board of the World Natural Health Organization. He is the 2004 recipient of the Integrity in Science Award granted by the Weston A. Price Foundation.

Dr. Blaylock serves on the editorial staff of the Journal of the American Nutraceutical Association and is the associate editor of the Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons, official publication of the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons.

He previously served as Clinical Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, Miss., and is currently a visiting professor of biology at the Belhaven College, also in Jackson.

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