



Herbs for Osteoarthritis

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Benefits of Herbs for Osteoarthritis

Herbal remedies are valuable weapons to use if you are living with osteoarthritis. Herbs work in several ways to maintain joint health, enhance mobility, and decrease pain. Let's take a look at some of the most effective herbs for osteoarthritis to help make living with OA less challenging.

Devil's Claw

Devil's claw is an herb from Africa. I have used it extensively for people who have a diagnosis of osteoarthritis. It is available in the forms of extracts, dried roots, capsules and pills. All are effective. If using the dried root, consume 1-3 grams three times daily. Follow label instructions if you are using a commercially prepared product.

In my experience, devil's claw either works incredibly well or not at all. If it is going to work, symptoms are relieved in less than one month. I would not recommend using it for over a month if no improvement is felt. When devil's claw works, it relieves joint stiffness and pain dramatically. Devil's claw is one of the first herbs that I recommend when people suffer from osteoarthritis of the hands or fingers.

Medicinal Mushrooms

Shitake, maitake, and turkey tail mushrooms are classified as herbal adaptogens. Over the past few decades, a great deal of research has been conducted about the healing benefits of adaptogenic herbs.

Adaptogens are powerful, well-tolerated, slow-working herbs that strengthen the body, reduce wear and tear, and improve your ability to cope with chronic pain and stress. Adaptogenic mushrooms will help you to sleep better, undisturbed from joint pain. Flexibility will also be improved. The mushrooms take several months to reach maximum effectiveness.

Medicinal mushrooms prevent your joints from damage caused by free radicals. Turkey tail mushrooms may reduce free radical, age-related changes by up to 60 percent. Shitake and maitake mushrooms may be included in the diet or taken as herbal supplements. Fresh shitakes are available in large supermarkets, while maitakes grow in temperate climates and are available seasonally in some locales. You could also opt to grow your own mushrooms on pre-inoculated logs. If you gather wild mushrooms, be sure that you identify them properly. Turkey tails are not generally consumed as food, but include one or two cups of fresh shitakes or maitakes in your diet several times each week.

If fresh mushrooms are unavailable, shitakes and maitakes may be purchased and used in dried forms. If you plan to purchase dried mushrooms for healing purposes, obtain them in bulk online from an herbalist, or at a natural food store, as the cost of packages sold in grocery stores is prohibitive and the amounts provided will be inadequate for medicinal use.

Turkey tail mushrooms are best consumed in tincture form. I do not recommend the use of pills or capsules as the healing compounds are not as readily available as those from the tinctured form. Concentrated shitake and maitake extracts are available as well; all are very effective. Follow label instructions.

Ginger Poultice

Herbal poultices quickly and effectively relieve painful and stiff joints. It is simple to make a warming herbal poultice at home. The amounts in the following recipe may be adjusted dependent upon how large an area you are treating.

Ingredients

- Dried, powdered ginger
- Vinegar (any inexpensive vinegar will do)
- A soft thick cloth which is large enough to cover the affected joint.

Next page: more herbs to reduce inflammation and improve joint circulation.

Ginger Poultice

Instructions

Warm the vinegar until it is very hot, but not boiling. Stir enough ginger into the vinegar to make a thick paste. Check to be sure that the temperature of the compress is warm, but not too hot. Apply the paste to the cloth and wrap the joint. Immediately remove the poultice if discomfort, burning, or irritation occurs. Use the poultice two to four times daily. Do not use the poultice if you have decreased sensation. Rinse the area after using the poultice.

If your hands or feet are painful and stiff; make a hand or foot bath using the same method. Simply add more vinegar and soak your hands or feet. Omit the poultice.

Ginger is a well-documented anti-inflammatory with pain-diminishing actions. By using a bath or poultice, ginger's healing benefits are delivered deeply into the joint.

Boswellia

Boswellia is an herb that reduces inflammation and improves joint circulation. This promotes healing and reduces pain, as well as enhancing joint mobility. I recommend the use of commercial preparations of boswellia. Purchase products which are standardized to contain the equivalent of 400 mg. of boswellic acids and taken three times daily.

Aloe Vera

Aloe contains three substances that are known pain relievers. It contains salicylic acid which is similar to aspirin; yet aloe is different in that it does not cause gastrointestinal irritation. Multiple anti-inflammatory compounds are contained in aloe as well, and aloe improves collagen formation, which promotes joint health.

Research has been conducted to compare the effectiveness of aloe with drugs that are commonly prescribed for the treatment of osteoarthritis. The studies indicate that aloe is just as effective as the prescription drugs, but with fewer side effects.

Aloe may be consumed as a juice or gel. Follow label instructions. The juice is available in large grocery stores. Reduce the amount of aloe consumed if loose stools develop.

Ubos (Hog Plum)

Ubos, commonly known as hog plum, grows in South and Central America as well as the Caribbean. Recent studies show that ubos bark contains compounds known as COX inhibitors. These compounds prevent age-related changes within the body, reduce inflammation, and decrease pain. In addition to relieving pain directly, ubos bark decreases stress on joints by relaxing the skeletal muscles.

Ubos bark is not readily available. You may need to obtain it from an online source or herbalist if you are interested in using it. You may make a decoction of the bark by simmering three teaspoons of dried bark in three cups of water for 20 minutes. Keep the pan covered while it is simmering. After 20 minutes, strain out the herb and discard it. Drink the warm tea two or three times daily. You should be able to tell within a few days if the herb is going to help relieve your osteoarthritis symptoms.

Additional Herbs Used in the Treatment of Osteoarthritis

- Yucca, rosemary, willow, and turmeric are rich in anti-inflammatory compounds. They reduce swelling, and pain.
- Willow bark may be used for acute discomfort or as a preventative. A daily dose of willow standardized to 60-120 mg. per day is recommended for long term use.
- A supplement of curcumin, made from turmeric, is supported by much research as an effective pain reliever. One gram, taken four times daily is recommended by health professionals.
- Celery seed is praised by some leading herbalists as a remedy for arthritis. Cinnamon is a rich source of antioxidants, which protects the joints from age related changes.

Conclusion

Using herbs can make you feel more comfortable and help your joints to remain healthy. In addition to relieving arthritis symptoms, all of the herbs discussed here offer healing effects for your whole body. Give some of them a try and see which ones work best for you.