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Arthritis - Fighting the Vicious Circle

by Myra Charleston

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There are over a hundred different disorders that can affect the joint. The two most common are deteriorating joint disease, aka osteoarthritis, and inflamed joint disease, aka rheumatoid arthritis.

Osteoarthritis is a condition wherein the cartilage lining a joint begins to deteriorate, allowing the bones to rub together. Movement becomes painful and restricted, which in turn can result in the gradual wasting away of unused muscles. Osteoarthritis usually affects the larger, weight-bearing joints such as the hips, knees and spine, but can occur in other joints as well.

Rheumatoid arthritis occurs when the immune system begins to attack the body, causing a chronic inflammation of the joints. In this disease, the thin membrane surrounding the joint becomes inflamed and swollen. This in turn leads to inflammation of other parts of the affected joint. Eventually the bones weaken and in severe cases the tissue may eventually be destroyed. Rheumatoid arthritis can occur in any joint, but is most common in the small joints of the hands and feet, such as fingers and toes.

The most common treatments for these diseases are NSAIDs, Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. NSAID's treat the symptoms, but do nothing to cure the disease. They are useful in relieving discomfort, but research done at Stanford University's Department of Medicine indicates they may have long-term, negative impact on the patient. The most frequent and severe side effect is the gastric problems in the stomach and digestive system. This results in more medication being used to relieve those symptoms. A vicious circle ensues of ingesting NSAID's and then more medicine to combat the side effects of the NSAID's.

**Is there a way to break out of this circle?
Maybe.**

A growing number of North Americans, including professional sports teams, chiropractors and massage therapists, report excellent results from emu oil and emu oil based sports/arthritis rubs in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis.

While emu oil is currently being sold on anecdotal properties, there is clinical evidence that it contains a high level of linolenic acid, a substance known to temporarily ease the discomfort of muscle and joint pain. In 1995, Dr. Thom Leahey of the *Arthritis Clinic* in Ardmore, Oklahoma, did a 2 week study on hands afflicted with arthritis. The results indicated that emu oil may substantially reduce the pain caused by arthritis. Dr. Leahey theorizes that the oil may be more beneficial to those suffering from the early stages of the disease, before the cartilage is destroyed completely.

Dr. Peter Ghosh, Director of Research, *Sydney's Royal North Shore Hospital*, relates that laboratory experiments have consistently confirmed the therapeutic value of emu oil for arthritis sufferers. "This is not witchcraft. These findings are supported by scientific evidence," Ghosh said. "It offers the best relief ever for victims of this crippling disease."

Another Australian, Dr. G. R. Hobday (Emu Oil - A Clinical Appraisal of this Natural and Long Used Product) culminates a 10 year clinical study by reporting that emu oil usage results in "reduced pain, swelling, and stiffness most evident where the joint is close to the skin surface, such as hands, feet, knees and elbows."

The report goes on to say that there is "*Significant benefit to recent bruising and muscle pain where injury is relatively superficial.*"

It should be noted that pain levels vary from one person to another. Add this to the variation in emu oil absorption due to skin types, and determining dosage is not always easy. A general rule is that you should apply the oil three to four times a day for three months. If at the end of that time you feel it is not beneficial, discontinue use.

Please remember that this information is not meant to substitute for a consultation with your physician, or another health care professional. Speak with your doctor if you have questions about primary care, or about any medical problem.