

## **Arthritic and Muscular Problems**

At Napiers, our herbalists treat hundreds of people every year with joint and muscular problems including:

- Osteoarthritis
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Gout
- Ankylosing Spondylitis
- Rheumatism
- Back ache
- Muscular tension

Many people experience side effects with orthodox drugs for arthritic conditions and so seek the more gentle and natural approach of herbal medicine.

Herbal medicine has a strong tradition in the treatment of joint diseases, especially arthritis and gout, and can also be very useful in the treatment and management of autoimmune conditions and muscular problems.

Medical Herbalists try to identify any factors that may be causing or exacerbating your health problems and therefore aim for a long-term treatment and improvement.

### **Herbal Medicine for Joint and Muscle Problems**

There are many herbs that can be useful and so it is best to have a consultation with a qualified herbalist who will make an individual mixture of herbs for you based on your specific needs and monitor your improvements.

#### **Internal Use**

Some useful herbs include:

**Devils Claw** – An African plant, Devil's claw is used by herbalists for its anti-inflammatory action that makes it beneficial in any sort of joint or muscle inflammation.

**Birch** – A traditional remedy for arthritis due to its reputed anti-inflammatory effect. Combines well with Devil's Claw, Meadowsweet, Dandelion and Red Clover.

**Willow Bark** – The drug aspirin was originally isolated from Willow Bark. However, although Willow Bark contains similar compounds to aspirin, it does not have the same adverse effects on the digestive system and is used by herbalists for its anti-inflammatory and mild analgesic properties. Combines well with Birch, Devil's Claw, Cramp Bark and Prickly Ash to reduce inflammation and discomfort in arthritis.

**Nettle** – A plant rich in vitamins and minerals beneficial in arthritis, nettle is used by Herbalists to remove toxins and is especially useful in gout to help the body get rid of excess uric acid. Can be taken as a herbal infusion or fresh plant juice.

**Celery** – Reputed to help the excretion of uric acid and also traditionally used for arthritic conditions. Take as a herbal tea or as a fresh plant juice.

**Cramp Bark** – Traditionally used for spasmodic muscular conditions and muscular rheumatism. Take as a herbal tea or tincture as needed.

### **External Use:**

**Comfrey** – Once known as Knitbone, Comfrey has a long history of use as a tissue healer and anti-inflammatory for arthritis, broken bones and muscular tears and sprains. It is best used externally as a compress combined with Arnica or as a cream.

**Aromatherapy** - There is a great tradition of using herbs and aromatic oils externally to help arthritic conditions and muscular tension. Warming oils are used to increase circulation and remove toxins from joints and muscles, therefore easing inflammation and discomfort. Essential oils such as Black Pepper, Juniper, Lavender, Rosemary, or Sweet Marjoram can be massaged onto affected areas diluted in comfrey or arnica oil or made into a cream using arnica and comfrey base creams, both of which help to heal tissues and are anti-inflammatory.

### **Diet in Arthritis and Joint Problems**

Poor diet and lifestyle can contribute to any type of joint or muscular problem as can stress, immune dysfunction, and obesity. Herbal medicine seeks to address all these underlying factors.

Some nutrients improve joint health, whilst other foods have been found to encourage joint inflammation and pain. Allergies or intolerances to certain foods can sometimes exacerbate or even cause joint inflammation and should be identified with the help of a nutritionist or medical herbalist.

### **Supplements**

#### **Vitamin C**

This is involved in the formation of collagen, which is important for the growth and repair of body tissues including bone and so may help to maintain healthy bones and joint tissues.

#### **Essential Fatty Acids**

These have a role to play in reducing pain and inflammation and are found in fish oils, hemp seed oil, flax oil and evening primrose/borage oil.

### **Glucosamine**

Glucosamine has been found by many arthritis sufferers, and people with sports injuries, to reduce pain and inflammation. Glucosamine is often combined with sulphur (MSM), which is also thought to have an anti-inflammatory effect, or Chondroitin, which is also found in the joint tissue and may help to repair some of the damage at the joint.

### **Minerals**

Minerals are important for bone and joint and muscle health, especially calcium and magnesium.

**As with all health problems, we strongly recommend that you consult a qualified medical herbalist to create a specific prescription and treatment plan to meet your individual needs.**

### **Napiers Clinics and Dispensaries**

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