Natural Supplements for Chronic Pain

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Interactions between Chronic Pain, Natural Medicines, and Prescription Medication

If you suffer from chronic pain and have considered using natural medicine, talk to a doctor who has specialized in integrative medicine. They will have expertise in both conventional and natural therapies, and understand any possible herb-drug interactions. They can recommend the optimal combination of the herbs, and in the right dosage. Overall, herbs and natural supplements for chronic pain have a safer profile than prescription drugs. The question is, which ones work best?

Anti-inflammatory Plants and Herbs

Some natural supplements for chronic pain work just like conventional non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs, and have the same mechanism of action; they block specific enzymes (i.e. COX-2) that play a role in swelling, pain and inflammation. Some of these include turmeric, green tea, ginger, cat's claw, devil's claw, willow bark and rosemary. Since there is an underlying inflammation in chronic pain, doctors often recommend NSAID as well as herbs. Of the herbs mentioned above, turmeric is the clear winner. Many patients who use it may be able to reduce or even eliminate NSAIDs completely. Like NSAIDs, turmeric may increase the risk of bleeding and may interact with blood thinners, although it is much safer than conventional NSAIDs. Used standardizes, certified products from a well establish brand, since herbal products are not evaluated by FDA, and their quality and efficacy vary from one brand to another.

Omega-3 from Fish Oil

Integrative physicians commonly recommend another supplement. Scientific literature supports omega-3 fatty acids for the management of various forms of pain, heart disease, depression, asthma and much more. For example, headaches, back pains, nerve pain, muscle pains and pain associated with autoimmune diseases can all improve by using this supplement. Although omega-3 fatty acids are found in a variety of sources (fish oil, flax seeds, krill and algae), fish oil seems to be the "best". Fish works even better when combined with conventional painkillers and herbs like turmeric or ginger. Omega-3 fatty acids may interact with prescription drugs (and may increase or reduce their effects in the body). For example, omega-3 may interact with blood thinners, anti-diabetes drugs, immune suppressants such as cyclosporine and corticosteroids and cholesterol lowering drugs. Buy a supplement from a reputable company that certifies their products and are free of heavy metals.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D, also known as "the sunshine vitamin" is made in your skin while it's exposed to the sun. It is estimated that 70% of North-American adults (and an even greater percentage of children) are vitamin D deficient. By taking vitamin D as a supplement, you can correct this deficiency, which had been linked with various types of pain, heart diseases, allergies, arthritis, asthma, cancer and many more other conditions. Research studies show a correlation between low levels of vitamin D and increased levels of chronic pain. In terms of vitamin-drug interactions, drugs like prednisone, orlistat, cholestryramine and some anti-seizure drugs

can impair the metabolism of vitamin D. This nutrient is available in any pharmacy and health food store; it is usually prescribed for chronic pain in higher doses than the standard 1000-2000 UI daily.