

Kids First

Arthritis and Spinal Degeneration



Most people think that arthritic conditions only affect the elderly, but the sad reality is that I see a large number of children at our Centre with the beginnings of osteoarthritis—spinal degeneration. Some of these children are very young—six, seven and 10 years old.

The type of arthritis I am describing is osteoarthritis, most often touted as a “wear and tear” type phenomena which for years has been associated with aging. This type of arthritis is the most wide-spread. It can be detected in 35 per cent of the general population by the age of 30, although my experience tells me that this number should be closer to 70 per cent to be more accurate. By the time someone is 70 years old, this condition seems to be universal.

A study by J.S. Lawrence, an osteoarthritis specialist in the US, a few years ago revealed that osteoarthritis can be noted on an X-ray in 10 per cent of 15 year olds. (From my experience with children and from being involved in research, that figure should be closer to 50 per cent).

This is not OK!

Osteoarthritis has been characterized clinically by pain, deformity, limitation of movement and eventually, by disability. It has been universally accepted as a simple and inescapable part of aging. Any notion or thought even remotely associated with slowing it down, stopping it or most certainly, reversing this condition, has been looked upon, until recently, as absolute “heresy.”

Repairing the Joints

Joints in your body are areas where two bones come together for the purpose of movement. The ends of

these bones are lined with a very special material called cartilage, which is designed in such a way as to prevent friction, so that movement is smooth. (As a matter of fact, the surface of the cartilage that lines your joints is so perfect as to be almost frictionless.) It is a self-regenerating mechanism—cartilage has the ability to regenerate. The whole joint is then bathed continuously in a special synovial fluid, which acts like a lubricant.

Essentially, osteoarthritis is your own body's attempt to repair something that has been damaged or under undue stress, such as from a vertebral subluxation—a change in the alignment or function of some of the bones of the spine.

Vertebrae in the spine are separated by a disc, which also undergoes a number of changes. It tends to decrease in size and fissures form in its material. This tends to lead to instability and as a result, the normal body's repair phenomena is called into play in an attempt to stabilize an area which is unstable. As a result, we see the formation of calcium deposits and bone spurs. These are seen as buttressing mechanisms to aid stability. Arthritis is now no longer, seen in terms of an actual disease, it is viewed as your own body attempting to repair an area of your spine which is unstable.

Arthritis is not caused by aging, it's caused by some of the vertebrae in the spine being subluxated and never corrected, among other reasons. The reason I see it in children is often the result of some traumatic incident that caused the subluxation to begin with.

Regeneration

It's possible to not only slow down this condition but also to arrest it and actu-

ally reverse the damage! It's important to have children checked to determine whether or not they have subluxations, not only from the perspective of ensuring normal health and function of the nervous system, but also to make certain that there is no error in the function of the vertebrae, which would then cause this arthritic process.

Here are some things you can do to help your child battle spinal degeneration. Take 1,500 milligrams of glucosamine sulphate with chondroitin per day, with meals. Glucosamine is part of the collagen matrix which makes up the substance of your discs and ligament structures. It will literally “feed” your discs. Chondroitin provides the raw materials needed for the repair of cartilage lining your joints.

Devil's claw root will reduce much of the inflammation and hence the pain of osteoarthritis. Take calcium and magnesium, 1,500–2,000 milligrams per day. Don't take before bedtime, as circulation slows down and these supplements may aid in the formation of kidney stones.

Take lots of vitamin C and bioflavonoids, between 2,500–8,000 milligrams per day. The chewable form may be easier for children to take. Vitamin B-complex is also important.

Consult a naturopath or homeopath for additional nutritional recommendations specific to your situation and do see a chiropractor to ask if your arthritis can be arrested or reversed. ■

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