

Kids First

Ogi Ressel, DC



Ritalin—

Over-prescribed and Dangerous

You may find this surprising, but the majority of children in second through fifth grade have been given prescriptions of the powerful drug Ritalin, even though many of them probably don't have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

That was the conclusion of researchers who published their findings in the *American Journal of Public Health* recently. Dr LeFever is an assistant professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at the Centre for Pediatric Research. He says doctors are over-prescribing Ritalin, which is a psychometric drug and a Class II narcotic.

"It's hard to believe this many children have the specific brain-related problem called ADHD," says LeFever.

It seems that doctors are routinely diagnosing children with ADHD even though there are no clinical tests for this condition. Instead, they find it easier to write a prescription for Ritalin than discuss diet or parenting skills with the child's family.

"Ritalin does not correct biochemical imbalances—it causes them," says Peter R. Breggin, MD.

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Dr Breggin is the director of the International Centre for the Study of Psychiatry and Psychology and faculty member at The Johns Hopkins University. In his book, *Talking Back to Ritalin*, he notes there is evidence Ritalin can cause permanent damage to the child's brain and its function.

"Pediatricians, parents, and teachers are not aware of these hazards because the ill effects of this drug have been ignored and suppressed in order to encourage the sale of this drug," says Dr Breggin states.

Damaging effects of Ritalin can include:

- Decreased blood flow to the brain.
- Disruption of growth hormone, leading to suppression of growth in the body and brain of the child.
- Permanent neurological tics, including Tourette's Syndrome.
- Addiction and abuse, including withdrawal reactions on a daily basis.
- Psychosis (mania), depression, insomnia, agitation and social withdrawal.
- Possible shrinkage (atrophy) or other permanent physical abnormalities in the brain.
- Worsening of the very symptoms the drug is supposed to improve including hyperactivity and inattention.
- Decreased ability to learn.

"Ritalin and other stimulants are currently prescribed to millions of children in the hope of improving their supposed hyperactivity, inattention and impulsivity," Breggin warns. He presents evidence that these drugs "work" by producing robotic or zombie-like behavior in children. This enforced docility and obedience can produce a few weeks of subdued behavior but has no positive effect on academic achievement and no positive long-term effects.

"Contrary to claims by drug advocates, giving Ritalin to a child does not help to prevent future problems such as school failure or delinquency," he emphasizes.

Ritalin's lack of effectiveness has been proven by hundreds of studies but has not been revealed to doctors, teachers or parents.

"Parents, teachers and even doctors have been badly misled by drug company marketing practices," says Breggin. "Drug companies have targeted children as the new market."

Most children receiving Ritalin have been identified for treatment by teachers who have been misled by drug company and government promotional campaigns for Ritalin and other stimulants.

"Educate—don't medicate," should be the motto of every parent or teacher who is tempted to resort to Ritalin, Breggin urges.

In next month's issue, I'll be presenting more info on psychometric drugs for children and options available to parents. Watch for it. ■

Ogi Ressel is a chiropractor in Burlington, Ontario. His column appears monthly.



Three Joint Pain Solutions

by Betty Norton

There's nothing like joint pain to put a damper on your day. Whether you're dealing with arthritis, a sports injury or simple over-use, pain and inflammation of the joints and surrounding tissue can limit your activity. Many people, however, are finding relief from these problems with natural supplements. Here are three of the best for joint and ligament problems:

Glucosamine Hydrochloride

Now becoming a household name, glucosamine is one of the "star supplements" of the last few years. Glucosamine is normally manufactured in the body and is needed to produce some of the key structural components of cartilage—the "shock absorbers" for our joints. It is also needed for the repair of joints and is a mild anti-inflammatory. No wonder people with joint pain are finding glucosamine "miraculous"! Many experts, including author Earl Mindell, recommend the hydrochloride form of glucosamine.

MSM (Methyl Sulfonyl Methane)

MSM is an organic sulfur which is easily absorbed by the body. Sulfur has been used for thousands of years in medicine and has been "rediscovered" in the last few years in the form of MSM. Research shows that the sulfur molecules restore flexibility and permeability to damaged cells, as well as build and strengthen the cells in the connective tissue, including cartilage and ligaments. MSM is being recognized as one of the most powerful natural pain relievers available.

Collagen

Collagen is the protein at the base of connective tissue, bones, cartilage, ligaments and even hair and nails. It also helps to bind together muscle cells. It is thought that collagen type II, found in gelatin, may actually slow or halt the progression of arthritis. Supplemental collagen is one of the most exciting new advances in natural joint pain relief.

If joint pain is keeping you from being as active as you'd like, consider trying these natural substances on their own or in combination, such as the one called *Liga-Mend™* manufactured here in Canada by **ORGANIKA®**. Health and happiness!

References: *The Sports Supplement Review*, 3rd Issue, by B Phillips, Mile High Publishing; *The Nutrition Desk Reference* by R Garrison & E Somer, Keats, 1990; *Earl Mindell's Supplement Bible* by E Mindell, Fireside, 1998.

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