

Your Health

Q & A

Got a niggling health problem? Our team of experts are here each month to advise you on the best alternatives

NATURAL RELIEF FOR CHILDHOOD ARTHRITIS

My 13 year old daughter has recently been diagnosed with arthritis in her knees. She has been prescribed medication and fortnightly hydrotherapy sessions. Her knees can get very painful rendering her unable to participate in sporty activities. What can you advise in the way of alternative treatments?

Harald Gaier advises:

It seems your daughter may have systemic juvenile arthritis, which is also known as Still's syndrome, although this usually affects children much earlier – sometimes as young as five. Did it begin with a fever and perhaps a rash? Was her temperature normal in the mornings, but elevated by late afternoon? About half of children who get Still's develop a rash that comes and goes, appearing when the temperature is high. In any event, you should keep an eye on her heart, because about one in 10 go on to develop heart conditions. You should also have your daughter regularly examined by slit-lamp right up to adulthood by an ophthalmologist, because a potentially serious insidious eye condition may set in.

The botanical medicine *Equisetum arvense* (horsetail) could well stimulate your daughter's metabolism and probably increase her resistance in the connective tissue where the disease does most of its damage. Your registered naturopath or practitioner of herbal medicine should be able to help you. Do not try to do this on your own. Cod liver oil has also proved to be useful in alleviating this condition.

Your daughter may wish to try acupuncture, which has been shown to be relatively effective in the treatment of this condition.

Finally, I have successfully prescribed a registered French combination remedy called Uraarhone for Still's which you can obtain by post from Gelsemium House Dispensary (tel: 012 0274 4717). Your daughter should take 10ml (dessertspoonful) in warm water or in half a cup of herbal tea.

COD LIVER OIL AND ACUPUNCTURE HAVE BOTH BEEN SHOWN TO BE HELPFUL IN TREATING JUVENILE ARTHRITIS.



"WHY IS MY SKIN SO DRY?"

Over the past couple of years I have developed extremely dry skin on my face and legs. The fronts of my calves look extremely scaly and flaky. I exfoliate and moisturise regularly, but there has been no long term improvement. Any suggestions?

Dee Atkinson advises:

Our skin is the largest organ in our body and its condition is often a real indication of our inner health. I always say to my patients that plastering lotions and potions onto the skin only goes halfway towards solving the problem. The other half must come from using herbs and supplements to correct the underlying issues. One of the possible causes of dry and flaky skin is an essential fatty acid deficiency. And one of the most triggers of essential fatty acid deficiency is going on a low-fat diet.

Another possible cause of dry skin is sensitivity to perfumed soaps and shower gels. Switch to a soap free wash face wash that is PH

balanced and fragrance free and try to use only pure soap on your body. Make your own body oil using calendula and jojoba base oil and add a few drops of frankincense and rose essential oil. Rather than using products to exfoliate, try gently skin brushing on dry skin before you have a shower.

To make sure you are getting enough essential fatty acids start using a supplement. A good way to do this would be to take daily doses of organic hemp seed oil. This has a perfect ratio of omega 6 and omega three fatty acids. You haven't mentioned your age, but if you are approaching menopause you might like to try flax seed oil instead. This also contains essential fatty acids, but is also a phyto oestrogen and can help to reduce any other menopause symptoms. A number of other factors such as bowel problems and hormone imbalances can also lead to dry skin, and you should consult a practitioner if you feel that you have any other health problems that could be triggering this.