

which helps symptoms in the short term; however I would always recommend investigating the underlying cause by arranging to have a stool analysis with a nutritional therapist. This test measures levels of gut bacteria and identifies any pathogens. To find a nutritional therapist near you see www.bant.org.uk

In terms of supplements, a strong probiotic such as Biocare's Bioacidophilus Forte would help boost lactase-producing bacteria. You could also try Pukka Herbs Asafoetida Plus, which helps to reduce gas and bloating, or Triphala Plus, which helps clear the bowel from toxic build-up (both are available from Xynergy Health Products, xynergy.co.uk/tel 08456 585858).

"WHY DO I KEEP GETTING MOUTH ULCERS?"

They do seem to occur more frequently when I'm run down or stressed, but I can't always avoid that. Could it be that I have some underlying virus or infection that is causing them to erupt so frequently.

Dee Atkinson advises:

There are two common causes of mouth ulcers. One is accidental damage to the delicate tissues in the mouth caused by hot drinks, tooth brushing or occasionally sensitivity to toothpastes. The other is an aphthous ulcer, which is usually due to stress or being run down. This sounds like the type of ulcer that you are getting, although there are more serious systemic causes, such as bowel disease and immune disorders or even a herpes infection.

When you are treating any long-term health problem you need to make sure that you have covered all bases, and through a bit of detective work start to eliminate possible causes. Visit your dentist and make sure that you have no underlying gum problems. Also change your toothpaste as sometimes the sweeteners or flavourings can trigger allergic reaction.

Start looking at your diet. Occasionally a lack of Vitamin B12 or iron can cause mouth ulcers. Vitamin B12 is found in fish, eggs, meat, dairy products and organ meat. Vegetarians are often deficient in B12 and it is a good idea to take a supplement. A liquid iron supplement, such as Florodix, is a good way cover the possibility of iron deficiency, Florodix is easy to absorb, does not cause constipation and tastes nice.

To deal with the underlying stress cause you could, as a short term measure, take skullcap, oat and passionflower compound. This will support your nervous system and help your body cope with a stressful lifestyle. In the long

"TO BOOST DIGESTIVE ENZYMES INCLUDE FOODS RICH IN NATURAL ENZYMES, SUCH AS FRESH BEAN AND SEED SPROUTS, PINEAPPLE AND PAPAYA."

term you need to look at how you are managing your work/life balance and look at strategies that you could use to help beat stress. Yoga, tai chi, or joining a local gym can all help.

Boost your immune system with echinacea and deglycyrrhizinated liquorice. Take this over a few months to really get on top of the problem. To prevent and to clear up any existing mouth ulcers, use a marigold and myrrh mouth rinse. I make one up using these two herbs, with a few drops of tea tree essential oil, some grapefruit seed extract and some chamomile.

"HOW CAN I KEEP MY JOINTS HEALTHY?"

Which supplements would you recommend to help keep my joints healthy and supple? I've been recommended bromelain, cat's claw, glucosamine, MSM and cod liver oil, but I'm not sure which is best. I go jogging regularly, but I have some stiffness in my right knee and a family history of arthritis, which is why I'm interested.

Dr Harald Gaier advises:

Most of the products you are taking are excellent for easing this painful condition. Rigorous scientific studies have shown:

- 1 Bromelain, protein-digesting enzymes obtained from the stem of the pineapple plant (*Ananas comosus*), has shown to be beneficial in osteoarthritis, inflammation, rheumatoid arthritis and scleroderma.
- 2 Devil's claw has helped people with osteoarthritis, inflammation and rheumatoid arthritis.
- 3 Glucosamine sulphate (the building-block of proteoglycans, the ground substance of articular cartilage) has demonstrated efficacy in alleviating osteoarthritis.
- 4 MSM or Methylsulphonylmethane (sulphur compound plentiful in fresh fruits and vegetables, milk, fish and grains) is quickly destroyed when foods are processed; the 'natural' supplement being sold is actually a chemical compound made from DMSO (dimethyl sulphoxide) which is a by-product of industrial wood-pulp processing. This is the only one where the jury is still out, because too few good scientific studies seem to exist and sales have been generated through US-style hype. Yet, I have come across patients who benefited from taking MSM.
- 5 Cod liver oil, a rich source of vitamins A and D, has been shown to be useful in the treatment of conditions resulting from abnormal absorption of calcium and phosphorus.

If you notice that taking these supplements benefits your joints in some way, then do carry on taking them for a total of about six months. Then wait to see what happens once you are not taking them. If you phase the supplements out one at a time, you may perhaps be able to get an inkling of where the origin of your joint problems might lie.

There are two other major causes for your kind of problem. One is food intolerance.

MEET THE PANEL

DEE ATKINSON



has been a practising medical herbalist since 1988 and now runs Napiers herbal health care in Edinburgh (the UK's largest herbal house), where she specialises in skin problems, arthritis and joint problems. She writes regular articles and columns in newspapers and magazines and has made TV and radio appearances.

STEPHANIE DRIVER



studied for her Bachelor of Science and Naturopathy in Perth, Western Australia. She has worked in two naturopath clinics near Perth for four years, specialising in nutrition and herbal medicine. She started practice as a senior naturopath at Apotheke 20-20 & Jurlique Day Spa in Chiswick, West London in 2004.

Contact Apotheke 20-20 & Jurlique Day Spa on 020 8995 2293 or visit apotheke20-20.co.uk

STELLA NEW



Stella New RSHom MBANT is a registered homeopath and nutritional therapist based in West Sussex, and technical consultant for Xynergy Health Products. Prior to her training she spent many years as an expedition leader, taking groups into some of the most challenging parts of the world, where she was inspired by the use of natural remedies for treating all manner of ailments. Email info@stellanew.co.uk

DR HARALD GAIER



is a naturopathic physician with a doctorate in naturopathic and botanical medicine and is registered in the UK as an osteopath, naturopath, acupuncturist, medical herbalist and homeopath. He is also the author of the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Homeopathy* and serves on the Education and Training Committee for the Prince of

Wales' Foundation for Integrated Health. Contact him at 11 Harley Street, London on 07917 662 042 or email info@drgaier.com. Go to drgaier.com for more info.

I have seen joint pains and stiffness disappear in patients, who, for example, eliminated wheat, rye, barley, spelt and oats. The other is an increase in gut permeability (the so-called 'leaky gut') for which you could undergo an uncomplicated laboratory test. This condition is then eminently correctable and the use of your joints could quickly become 'freed-up' thereafter.

Finally, there is a natural combination remedy called Uarthone made in France by a very renowned homeopathic laboratory. My experience has been that, when all else had failed, this very often succeeded. I have found it to be particularly beneficial in clearing chondrocalcinosis (in this calcium salts are deposited in your joints' synovial fluid). In the UK it is available from The 101 Dispensary in Poole, Dorset (tel: 012 0274 4717).