

NATURAL ALTERNATIVES FOR TENDONITIS

My boyfriend suffers from tendonitis which flares up from time to time, especially when he participates in high impact activities like running. The pain is largely felt in the knee, although a physiotherapist has told him that the inflammation extends to the hip joint. Although he has found acupuncture to be beneficial in the past, he can't afford to do it too regularly. Any ideas on what he can do – he enjoys many sports and doesn't want to give them up?

TO PREVENT THE RECURRENCE OF TENDONITIS, PROPER STRETCHING/WARM UP BEFORE EXERCISE IS VERY IMPORTANT

Dr Caroline Longmore advises:

Tendonitis is an inflammatory condition causing acute or chronic pain localised in the tendons – the connective tissue that connects muscles to bones – and results from a strain. To soothe the inflammation when it occurs, rest the injured part as it begins to hurt to avoid further injury. Apply ice to the painful area to decrease swelling, compress with elastic bandage to control the swelling (not too tight) and elevate the injured part above the level of the heart to increase drainage of fluid.

To avoid recurrence of the tendonitis, proper stretching/warm up before exercise is very important.

A deficiency of vitamins and minerals is associated with defective formation and maintenance of tendons, so make sure you're getting enough. Vitamins A, E and C, as well as the minerals zinc and selenium, are all important for their wound-healing properties and for their protective antioxidant effects. Bromelain, contained in pineapples, reduces inflammation in the case of injury, and curcumin – the yellow pigment in turmeric – is an excellent anti-inflammatory. The flavonoid group of plant pigments responsible for the bright colours of many fruits and vegetables reduces inflammation and stabilises collagen structure (collagen is the major protein in tendons and other connective tissues).

Physiotherapy can aid in the pain relief and recovery from injury (eg tens machine and ultrasound). For all serious injuries always consult your physician.

HELPING HYPOTHYROIDISM

For the past two years, I've struggled with an underactive thyroid. I feel constantly low, have very little energy and my work and social life have suffered as a consequence. What foods should I be eating and which supplements should I take to help the condition?

Harald Gaier advises:

This condition is also known as hypothyroidism and it affects virtually all your body's cells and functions. Between one and four per cent of the adult population have moderate to severe hypothyroidism and further 12 per cent have mild hypothyroidism. The most common cause in the past was iodine deficiency where the thyroid gland adds iodine to an amino acid (tyrosine) to create the thyroid hormones. This has become rare nowadays due to iodised table salt. Yet it can still be caused by the excessive consumption of foods which block iodine utilisation, such as turnips, cabbage, mustard, cassava root (also called manioc – tapioca and sago are made from this), soybean, peanuts, pine nuts and millet. Cooking usually inactivates, or at least attenuates, this blocking mechanism.

A number of drugs, including lithium, dopamine, steroids, some cough mixtures, sulphonamide and even radiographic contrast agents (such as those used for kidney x-rays) can adversely affect thyroid function. Avoid taking massive doses of vitamin C, or glutathione, as this can alter the thyroid function. Prolonged use of some medicinal herbs, namely bladder kelp, bladderwrack, bugleweed, dulse and kelp, may also bring about iodine-induced thyroid deficiency. However, short courses (up to six weeks) of such herbs will usually increase thyroid activity – stop taking them before the 'turnaround' point is reached, at which your thyroid starts to under-function. Multivitamin preparations containing more than 100ug (0.1mg) of iodine per capsule/tablet will eventually do the same thing. In fact, avoid large doses of, or prolonged exposure to, iodine in any form, since this can induce a sudden drop in thyroid hormone production.

If you're taking thyroid medication, don't take iron supplements as they can bring on symptoms of hypothyroidism. Iron binds to thyroxine, making it insoluble. If you think that taking iron supplements will give you more energy (which you lack in hypothyroidism) by allowing your blood to carry more oxygen, you are wrong.

IF YOU THINK THAT TAKING IRON SUPPLEMENTS WILL GIVE YOU MORE ENERGY (WHICH YOU LACK IN HYPOTHYROIDISM) BY ALLOWING YOUR BLOOD TO CARRY MORE OXYGEN, YOU ARE WRONG.

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.

DR CAROLINE LONGMORE



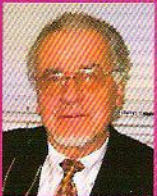
worked as a Paediatric Doctor in Paris and for Medicine Sans Frontieres before retraining in naturopathic medicine in the UK. She co-founded Galen Naturopathic Centre in Richmond, Surrey, where she specialises in acupuncture, detox/destress and anti-ageing treatments. Telephone Galen on 020 8332 7711.

STEPHANIE DRIVER



studied for her Bachelor of Science and Naturopathy in Perth, Western Australia. She has worked in two naturopathic 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

HARALD GAIER



is a naturopathic physician with recognition of equivalence to a medical degree in Austria and has a doctorate in naturopathic and botanical medicine. Harald is registered in the UK as an osteopath, naturopath, acupuncturist, medical herbalist and homeopath. He has published papers on medical research and on the current economics of medicine in the medical literature. He served on the Research Committee of the Prince of Wales' Foundation for Integrated Health for six and a half years and is currently on the Research Committee of the Prince of Wales' Foundation for Integrated Health for six and a half years and is currently on the Foundation's Education and Training Committee. Contact: 11 Harley Street, London on 020 7612 9800 or visit drgaier.com

DINAH MORLEY



is Deputy Director of YoungMinds, the national charity committed to improving the mental health of babies, children and young people. YoungMinds Parents Information Service (0800 018 2138) exists for any adult with concerns about the mental health of a child or young person. YoungMinds website (youngminds.org.uk) and publications cover many issues affecting children and young people, such as depression, eating problems and self-harm.