

What Is Arthritis?

Arthritis literally means “*inflammation of a joint.*” It is accompanied by pain, swelling, and changes in joint structure. The distance between the two bones within the joint becomes narrower and the cartilage that forms a smooth lining at the ends of the bones becomes thinner and irregular. There is a restricted range of motion, with cracking and creaking noises caused by the rubbing of the two irregular surfaces. The affected joints usually feel stiff after periods of immobility such as the morning after a night’s sleep.

Two Major Types Of Arthritis

The two major types of arthritis are Osteoarthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis. **Rheumatoid Arthritis:** more severe with development of deformities and loss of function. It is thought to be an autoimmune disease. **Osteoarthritis:** more common and results from the effects of wear and tear. It tends to affect joints that have been subjected to overuse, trauma, or excessive weight bearing.

Conventional Treatments For Arthritis

Unfortunately, there is no cure for arthritis in conventional medicine. The drugs available do not come without side effects, and once discontinued, the symptoms recur. Conventional medical doctors mainly prescribe anti-inflammatory drugs to treat the symptoms of arthritis.

Chinese Medicine And Arthritis

Chinese medicine has a great deal to offer in the treatment of arthritis, and there has been a lot of research into this in China. The results which can be achieved with acupuncture, sometimes combined with herbs, are nothing short of superb. In my opinion Chinese medicine is absolutely the treatment of choice for this condition. **This is quite well known, and most acupuncturists find that arthritis is the most common condition that brings people for treatment.**

Broadly speaking arthritis is seen in Chinese medicine to have hot and cold forms, and commonly to involve an element of fluid accumulation ("dampness"). The most important treatment is acupuncture. Arthritis is seen as due to disease factors blocking the flow of Qi ("energy") in the acupuncture channels and in the joints and acupuncture is able to directly address this. The acupuncturist will usually needle points in the area affected together with points further along the limbs. Further points are added to treat the underlying condition that has led to the arthritis. When it is the cold form of arthritis, acupuncture is combined with the use of moxa, a herb which is burned to produce heat. One way of doing this is to burn moxa on the handle of the needle. This conducts heat deep into the joints and is very effective.

In more severe cases, taking an individually prescribed Chinese herbal formula reinforces the effect of the acupuncture.

Both osteo and rheumatoid arthritis respond well to treatment, as do other arthritic conditions such as ankylosing spondylitis. Osteoarthritis tends to respond more quickly. As a rule, treatment once a week is appropriate, and improvements usually begin after four or five treatments. In the case of rheumatoid arthritis, if it flares up and the joints are hot and swollen, it may need treatment several times a week for a few weeks to quickly settle the flare up before too much damage is done. The total number of treatments needed depends on how severe the arthritis is and how long the person has had it, but 20 to 30 treatments is probably typical and will usually produce dramatic improvement. In many cases it is a good idea to continue with monthly treatment after this to maintain the improvement, but milder cases will often be fine for years and may then need a few more treatments if the symptoms show signs of recurring.

About The Author

Dr. Vincent Cunhai Yu is a registered acupuncturist who has worked in China and Russia. He is practicing now in VANCOUVER. Dr. Yu is a specialist who has worked in a large hospital for 16 years.

Dr. Yu has done extensive researches on **back pain, digestion related troubles and headaches**. He is also an expert on **arthritis, soft tissue injury, frozen shoulder, tennis elbow, neck pain, insomnia, facial palsy, depression, strokes, quit smoking, and lose weight, hair loss, low immunity, eczema and acne**.

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