

Gamma-Linolenic Acid Explained

Every day, millions of people the world over fight a daily battle against arthritis. These are people of all ages, men, women and even children, who are challenged by more than 100 different types of the disease. And, while the battle can be long and certainly painful, there are new weapons available to make the fight a little bit easier.

Most people think of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis when they consider the painful and debilitating condition called 'arthritis'. Fortunately, the average arthritis patient now has access to more treatment options than ever before.

Drug TherapyThe most common drug therapy prescribed involves the use of NSAID class drugs. These drugs have anti-inflammatory properties, and because they are non-steroidal, they are generally considered safer than other drug therapy options. Cortisone shots may be prescribed in cases where the patient is suffering from severe localized pain.

Lifestyle ChoicesLiving a healthy lifestyle can certainly have positive effects on your overall quality of life. For this reason, doctors will suggest that people with arthritis alter some of their lifestyle management choices. Regular exercise is crucial to living well with arthritis. Weight bearing exercises, such as strength training, are widely recommended. Walking and other low-impact exercises can also be beneficial. Keeping arthritis under control also has a great deal to do with your ability to maintain a healthy weight and diet.

Gamma-Linolenic AcidThere is now another treatment option for people with arthritis: using natural therapies, such as Gamma-Linolenic Acid (GLA) to complement more traditional medical options. Gamma-linolenic Acid is a type of omega-6 fatty acid that is derived from the seeds of some plants. There has been much excitement within the medical world over the health benefits derived from GLAs, and there is new speculation that these 'wonder acids' can have beneficial effects for some arthritis sufferers. Some of the more widely known GLAs are derived from the seeds of the black currant, borage and evening primrose. These plants have long been used as natural remedies to treat a variety of ailments, and now the GLAs derived from these plants are being used to alleviate the inflammation often associated with arthritis.

Here is the latest medical indication of how GLAs can help counteract many of the most painful effects of living with arthritis. In 2000, the Cochrane Collaboration reported the results after examining seven studies of GLA plants, including the popular borage, evening primrose, and black currant. Researchers studied the oils derived from these plants, and how they could be used to treat the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis. Unfortunately, the studies were inconclusive and the researchers were not able to prove the true efficacy of GLA plants and oils. However, some medical researchers still believe that there is some kind of link between GLAs and the potential for relief of arthritic pain, morning joint stiffness, overall discomfort and tenderness.

While most GLAs and their native plants enjoy a respectable, long-standing record as safe and effective herbs, there are certain risks to consuming these herbs in any form. Many health experts and herbalists warn that many GLAs and their plants should not be taken with prescription medications. Furthermore, some GLAs can also worsen an underlying medical condition. Researchers have noted the specific negative effects caused by certain GLA plants. For instance, it has been noted that some borage seed oil preparations contain ingredients called pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs) that can exacerbate the symptoms of liver disease or cause serious harm to the liver. Evening primrose oil, when taken with phenothiazine drugs, has been linked to problems. Moreover, many herbal remedies are actually potent drugs, and may cause strong side effects such as nausea, diarrhea, intestinal gas and bloating.

Researchers continue to find new and better treatments for arthritis. Gamma-Linolenic Acid is one such option that is still under scrutiny in the medical field. Education is often your best weapon, so do your own research and learn all that you can about the many treatment options that are available to help you with the fight against arthritis.