

DO YOU HURT?

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Millions of people in the Caricom region suffer from some sort of pain, and world-wide it is the most common reason people visit a doctor. Because of the lack of dependable treatments, many people may suffer from pain for years (*Nat Rev Neurol* 2011 7:173), if not for their entire lifetime.

PAIN AND INFLAMMATION:

Pain can be acute, lasting for a short period of time, or chronic, lasting for weeks, months, or years. Chronic pain results from overactive, inflammatory responses. Acute or chronic pain can result from "overdoing" sports, injuring oneself during sports or other activities, or other trauma.

Typically, pain is accompanied by inflammation. If a condition ends with the suffix "-itis" one refers to an inflammatory, painful illness. Examples of such conditions are: arthritis (joints), bronchitis (lungs), bursitis (shoulders, hips), colitis (colon), laryngitis (throat), and sinusitis (sinuses) to mention a few.

Chronic pain is also typically associated with autoimmune conditions ["run-away" inflammation that destroys healthy tissue] such as lupus (collagen), multiple sclerosis (nerve cells), psoriasis (skin), vitiligo (skin pigmentation), and celiac disease (digestive).

In diseases such as diabetes, pains (and numbness) are often the result of damage to nerve cells. Or one may suffer from a disease such as fibromyalgia in which inflammation and pain cause joints, tissues, and muscles to become especially sensitive to external sensations. "Many cases of chronic pain remain unexplained, but they hurt all the same." (Alice Park, Time Magazine, 3.4.11)

Immune Homeostasis (Balance):

"One common thread in a body's reaction to injury is inflammation" (Dr. R.G. Thompkins, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA). Inflammation is an essential part of the body's healing processes. When the body is hurt, its white blood cells release immune factors such as cytokine proteins. Some cytokines increase inflammation, while other types of cytokines decrease inflammation. The immune system produces more of one type or the other depending on what sort of immune response the body needs at the moment.

It is as important for the body to decrease its inflammatory responses after a challenge has been met, as it is for the body to initiate inflammation at the beginning of the process. It is simple--optimal health depends on a delicate balance of inflammatory and anti-inflammatory immune factors. This balanced state is known as immune homeostasis (*Curr Drug Targets Immune Endocr Metabol Disord* 2005 5:413).

Balancing Inflammatory and Anti-inflammatory Immune Factors:

The importance of balanced immune responses is seen in the results of a clinical trial of fibromyalgia patients with widespread severe pain of unknown origin. As compared to individuals that did not have chronic pain, patients with fibromyalgia had lower levels of cytokine proteins that help the body reduce painful sensations (*Arthritis Rheum.* 2006 54:2656).

Aspirin and NSAIDs (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs):

Doctors often suggest aspirin or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) to decrease inflammation and pain. Athletes will frequently use these medications prior to competitions, or after their competition as a preventive.

These medications put people at risk of significant digestive, cardiovascular, kidney, and muscular/skeletal problems (*Phys Sportsmed* 2010 38:132-8). For example, according to the American College of Gastroenterology, the regular use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs is the second major cause of ulcers. Because of concerns about health risks, many physicians suggest trying complementary, more natural methods to decrease pain and inflammation (*Neurosurg Focus* 2006 15:21:E11).

Complementary Approaches:

In several studies, glucosamine, a building block of joints, has been shown to help the body reduce inflammation and pain (*Geriatrics* 2009 64:20). Omega-3 fish oils have shown promise as well (*Proc Nutr Soc* 2010 69:316). However, since there have been no definitive studies as to their utility, controversy still rages.

Hyperimmune egg, an all natural, food-based ingredient, may be another approach to helping the body support healthy joint activity and mobility. In a study conducted at a major hospital in NYC, individuals on hyperimmune egg for 30 days reported higher levels of joint comfort (*J Med Food* 1998 1:171). When glucosamine is added in combination with hyperimmune egg, the body appears to heal joints even more rapidly (*US Patent 6,706,267*) and report enhanced changes in their quality of life.

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