

Arthritis Management there is a Natural Alternative

Arthritis, or inflammation of the joints, can affect all of us, both young and old. While generally considered a debilitating disease, proper management can greatly improve the quality of life for arthritis sufferers, and medication is not the only answer. Whether your arthritis is mild or severe, there are many natural ways to manage arthritis. There are significant benefits in adopting the natural management approach, with none of the risks associated with the side effects typical of arthritis medication.

Hopewood, Australia's premier health retreat, has a team of friendly, highly qualified, nutritional health professionals, including naturopaths and osteopaths, who can help you identify natural alternatives with which to address arthritis. Hopewood's natural health philosophy – which advocates a diet rich in fresh fruit and vegetables, regular gentle exercise, plenty of fresh air, pure water and rest – embodies many of the principles of natural arthritis management. It's a simple philosophy that has enjoyed remarkable success.

Hopewood naturopath, Jenny Colless-Buhn, has four tips to help manage arthritis.

1. Get Active

Regular, gentle exercise is great for overall health and wellbeing, and can also reduce pain, increase movement, and reduce fatigue. There are many different types of gentle exercises to engage in, without jarring fragile joints. These include:

- gentle stretching and yoga – these are a good start to exercise as they are very gentle, yet extremely beneficial to arthritis sufferers;
- walking – which burns calories, strengthens muscles and builds denser bones; and



- water-based exercise, such as aqua-aerobics – which helps strengthen muscles and increases range of motion, while the buoyant nature of water reduces wear and tear on sore joints.

But before you start an exercise program, remember that it's best to get professional advice – let Hopewood's fully qualified naturopaths get you started.

2. Eat fresh, natural, and regularly

Eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables is a great way to maintain a healthy immune system, which will in turn help with the natural management of arthritis. Eating pure and healthy food is not as boring as it sounds—Hopewood has a wide range of delicious dishes in its vegetarian cuisine for you to sample. The Retreat even has a recipe book bursting with healthy, yet scrumptious meals that you can make at home, and most are quick and easy to prepare.



The particular foods you eat can also affect your arthritis. Jenny advises arthritis sufferers to increase their intake of alkali-forming foods, namely fresh fruit and vegetables—particularly green leafy vegetables, watermelon and celery—to approximately 65 – 75% of the total dietary intake (by weight). Sources of essential fatty acids, such as seeds, nuts, olive oil and avocado, should also be increased.

On the other hand, the intake of vegetables of the nightshade family, such as potato, tomato, eggplant, chilli and capsicum, should be minimised as they are known to aggravate arthritic conditions in some people. Acid-forming foods, such as dairy products, wheat, bread, pasta and cereal, should be reduced to equate to approximately 25 – 30% of your diet.

Hopewood naturopaths also recommend drinking at least one litre of water a day. Fresh fruit and/or vegetable juices, such as watermelon, celery and carrot, are also great for arthritis sufferers.

Individual allergies to certain foods can affect the severity of arthritis. Ask Hopewood's naturopaths about your allergies, and obtain more information about which particular foods are part of the natural arthritis management plan.

3. Maintain or reach a healthy weight

If you are carrying a couple of extra kilos that you really shouldn't be, they could be contributing to your pain. It's important to maintain a healthy weight – any extra kilos will add stress to your joints, thus increasing your pain. However, being underweight can be equally detrimental to your health, and thus a balance must be reached. The healthier you are, the easier it will be to manage your arthritis.

4. Relax and de-stress

Relaxing both your mind and body is the best way to manage pain. Meditation has long been used as a pain management technique, and is an effective way to manage stress. Hopewood has a wide range of relaxation activities, ranging from yoga and Tai Chi, to the Retreat's own Relaxacise program.

The alternative forms of massage are great treatments for sore and stiff muscles. While the benefits vary from person to person, massage can decrease pain and increase circulation, energy and flexibility. Let Hopewood find the massage that suits your arthritic needs.

It doesn't matter how subtle or extreme your form of arthritis is – Hopewood can help identify a natural way to approach it, and set you on a path to managing your arthritis effectively.



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