

***Natural Pain Medications & Therapies***

Athletes are undoubtedly susceptible to various aches and pains resulting from physical activity. Alleviation of these symptoms is important for two reasons, one being a prompt reduction in pain in order to continue performing, and the other to halt the pain-inciting inflammatory process prior to development into a chronic inflammatory condition.

Tendonitis, bursitis, arthritis, sprains, strains and other inflammatory conditions resulting from athletic activity have been treated traditionally with over the counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDS). However, these medications do not provide the most desirable results for inflammatory injuries, as NSAIDS are associated with increased cartilage degeneration via inhibitory effects on cartilage growth. Additionally, NSAIDS can slow the production of the protective stomach mucus, resulting in stomach pain and ulcers after time.

Various plant-derived anti-inflammatories can be used to achieve immediate prevention of inflammation in acute and chronic injuries.

***Bromelain:***

An enzyme derived from the pineapple, bromelain can halt the inflammatory process as a result of over exertion and swelling. Bromelain can also provide some measure of pain relief as a result of its effects on the inflammatory process. Bromelain should be taken away from food for best results; when taken with food it will assist in the digestive process (not always a bad thing...). Bromelain has few side effects-the most notable is a 'warm' sensation when taking on an empty stomach.

***Curcumin***

Curcumin is the yellow pigment of the spice turmeric. Curcumin displays various properties that are beneficial for the athlete. Namely, curcumin acts to stimulate tissue repair, which allows it to assist in muscle regeneration after traumatic injury. One recent study showed that muscle regeneration is greatly enhanced following the systemic (taken by mouth) administration of curcumin. Because of curcumin's role in regulating muscle growth, it is an applicable treatment for sports-related muscle injuries. Additionally, curcumin has long been known as a potent anti-inflammatory agent, working to inhibit various aspects of the inflammatory process. Similar to bromelain, curcumin shares similar side effects such as stomach warmth.

## **Prolotherapy**

Prolotherapy is an extremely safe orthopedic procedure that stimulates the body's natural healing processes to strengthen ligaments and tendons weakened by traumatic or over-use injury. With a precise injection of a solution directly on the site of the torn or stretched ligament or tendon, prolotherapy creates a mild, controlled inflammation that stimulates the body's natural healing mechanisms to lay down new collagen fibers on the weakened area. In effect, prolotherapy is "spot-welding" for your body.

Prolotherapy may be helpful for chronic musculoskeletal pain, including:

- Partially torn tendons, ligaments and cartilage
- Arthritis
- Knee pain
- Neck pain
- Fibromyalgia
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Sciatica

## **Trigger Point Therapy**

Trigger points are intensely spasmed areas of muscle that can be quite painful, inhibiting normal use of the affected muscle. Sometimes pain will radiate away from the muscle leading to pain in other seemingly unaffected areas of the body.

Trigger point therapy is directed at muscle spasms that do not resolve on their own. This involves injecting a small amount of local anesthetic directly into the spasmed muscle, or trigger point. The anesthetic, in addition to relieving pain, 'resets' the nerve impulses that are causing the muscle to spasm. This allows the muscle to relax, resulting in no more pain. Improved range of motion and mobility, less pain, and healthy muscle function are the result. Trigger Point Therapy is used for acute or chronic muscle spasms.

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