

A WORD ON MUSCULO-SKELETAL PAIN

by Glenn R. Hoey, N.D., CSCS, ACSM

Millions of Americans suffer with many different types of musculo-skeletal disorders. These can range from simple back pain to more serious conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and SLE (lupus). I enjoy treating most of these types of diseases, because they are commonly improved with physical medicine, a combination of modalities that include hot or cold packs, electrical muscle stimulation (EMS), ultrasound, soft tissue massage, and spinal manipulation. I find that the combination of these modalities is far superior than any one of them alone.

What causes so many of us to have so much trouble with muscle spasms, joint pain, tendinitis, etc.? Are we just too darn hard on ourselves? Well, if you have read any of my other articles you will know by now that I look deeper into the chemistry of the body to understand the true cause of the problem. The key to a strong and healthy framework is proper nutrition. We must get adequate protein and soluble minerals and vitamins.

Let's look closer at the musculoskeletal system. What is its function? To provide the structural framework for how our body looks and moves. We have a skull to hold the brain and its contents, and a vertebral spine to help create a back and neck to support our head. We have arms and legs to help us move and lift objects, and we have ribs to protect and support the heart and lungs. What is it comprised of? Obviously, it is muscle, bone, cartilage, tendon, and ligament. What are these made of? They are made of protein and minerals like calcium, magnesium, manganese, zinc, copper, sodium (yes, salt!), and potassium.

A long-term deficiency in any of these nutrients will create weaknesses in the system, leading to injury, abnormal repair, and perhaps abnormal mineralization (osteoarthritis and osteoporosis). A long-term lack of protein and minerals creates a weakened structure. We develop abnormal spinal curvatures and weakened intervertebral discs and require surgical fusions to hold us together. We walk less and exercise less.

What do I mean by adequate protein? It means optimum amounts of meat, fish, chicken, eggs, milk, cottage cheese, and soy proteins. It probably means more than you think, maybe more than you currently eat in a day. However, you must also digest and assimilate your protein for it to be of any benefit. That may mean taking a digestive enzyme supplement with meals.

We must also get the minerals and nutritive salts that transport the minerals into the cells. If minerals are insoluble, they cannot be used by the body; moreover, some of these minerals (like calcium) can be deposited in places where they will cause harm, such as the kidney (forming stones) or joints (osteoarthritis). I use blood chemistry tests to determine exactly what your body needs and where it is deficient.

We do not have to live in such pain. Our bodies are divinely designed to last us for decades. There is no reason we can't have a strong, flexible, high-energy body well into our seventies, eighties, beyond. We must feed it properly, however, to make it last. Dr. Glenn R. Hoey is a licensed Naturopathic Physician practicing in Wenatchee, WA. He is a graduate of Bastyr University's Program of Naturopathic Medicine. Dr. Hoey's special area of interest is the treatment of chronic illness by means of diet and food supplementation. He has been practicing more than 15 years. Dr. Hoey also supervises student clinicians as an adjunct faculty member at the Bastyr Natural Health Clinic.