

## Osteoarthritis: UNDERSTANDING YOUR TREATMENT OPTIONS

**A variety of treatment options may be considered in the management of your OA.**

**O**f the many forms of arthritis, osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common. OA is caused by a breakdown of the cartilage which acts as a cushioning, between bones in one or more joints. OA develops slowly, and is more common in women than men. The most commonly affected joints are those in the hands, the feet, the spine, and the weight-bearing joints of the hips and knees. Primary OA is mostly associated with aging and a breakdown of the cartilage. Secondary OA is associated with other conditions, such as obesity, trauma, gout, diabetes, and other hormonal disorders.

### Symptoms:

- Pain in the joint(s) with repetitive use, often worse at the end of the day
- Swelling around the affected joints
- Warming around the joint
- Creaking of the joint
- Stiffness
- Bony spurs
- Joint tenderness

- Loss of flexibility
- “Grating” of the joint
- Muscle atrophy around the affected joint(s)

### **YOUR TREATMENT**

Because your condition is unique and each person’s symptoms vary according to type, severity, and what relieves them, a variety of treatment options may be considered in the management of your OA. The decision on which treatment should be used will be based upon your preferences, examination findings, experience treating patients with similar conditions and the best available scientific evidence.

- **CHIROPRACTIC** care of osteoarthritis focuses on relieving musculoskeletal symptoms using methods such as chiropractic adjustments / manipulation to spine or other joints. As a musculoskeletal condition, OA is well-suited to chiropractic methods of care for management of symptoms.
- **EXERCISE**, including stretching and low-impact methods of exercise, have been clinically shown to improve symptoms of osteoarthritis. Though the pain of OA may make it difficult to feel motivated to exercise, persistence through the mental barriers will ultimately benefit you as you cope with symptoms. The key to exercising with OA, is to begin slowly. Appropriate exercises and methods to begin slowly will be discussed with you in your chiropractor’s office.
- **AVOCADO and SOYBEAN UNSAPONIFIABLES** appear to decrease inflammation and repair cartilage in osteoarthritis patients. The unsaponifiables are extracted from the avocado and soybean oil; it is not possible to get enough of the ingredient by eating avocados and soybeans, so a supplement is needed. The typical dosage that has been studied is 300 mg per day. It can take 2 weeks to 2 months for the supplement to take effect.





Though chiropractic is primarily associated with musculoskeletal conditions, there is a population that is not taking advantage of this drugless, non-invasive method of care. According to a recently published study, 67 percent of pregnant women surveyed reported musculoskeletal pain. In the study, 599 women who were in their second trimester of pregnancy completed a survey of their pain history, duration of pain, location of pain, pain intensity, and activities of daily living, treatment frequency, and satisfaction with treatment. Of the women with pain, 21 percent said they have severe pain; 80 percent said they got less than four hours of sleep each night because of pain, and 75 percent of women with pain had to take pain medications. Interestingly – and importantly – 85 percent of the women surveyed said that they had not been offered any treatment for their musculoskeletal pain. (Skaggs CD, et al. "Back and Pelvic Pain in an Underserved United States Pregnant Population: A Preliminary Descriptive Survey." *Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics*. February 2007; Vol. 30, Iss. 2, pp. 130-134.) In many cases, chiropractic care can be an effective means of treating pregnancy-related musculoskeletal pain. Please see your chiropractor about the appropriateness of care during pregnancy if you are experiencing pain.

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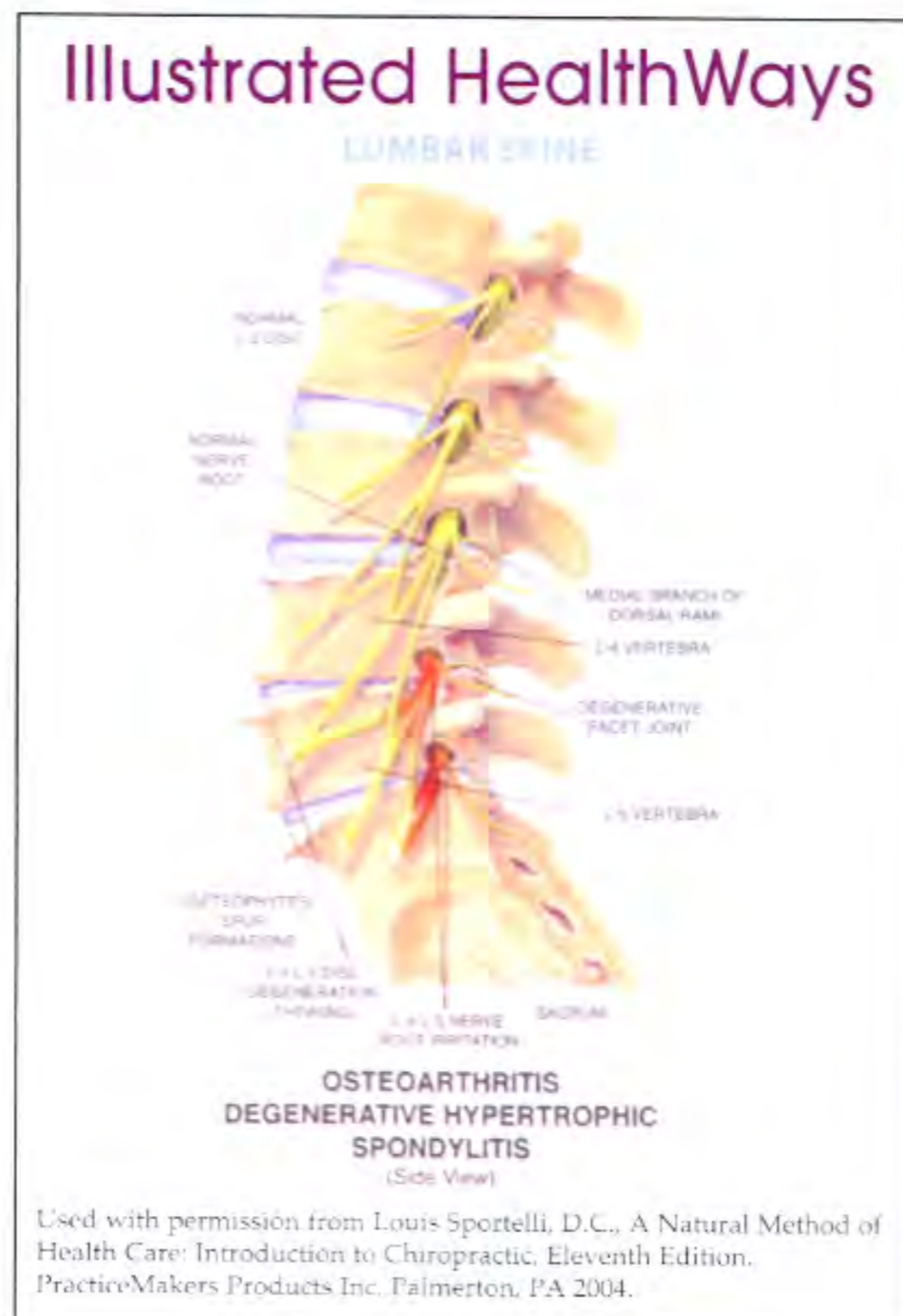
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- **ACUPUNCTURE** involves the insertion of very fine needles into the skin at points determined based on the condition being treated. Acupuncture has been used for centuries and the theory behind it is that the needles can affect and improve the body's flow of energy (called Chi). In addition to the needles, forms of acupuncture can incorporate pressure, electric currents, laser, or heat
- **GLUCOSAMINE SULFATE/CHONDROITIN SULFATE** supplementation is thought to improve the symptoms of osteoarthritis. Glucosamine



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- sulfate (not glucosamine hydrochloride) is believed to aid in building cartilage; chondroitin sulfate is believed to improve cartilage elasticity and keep enzymes from destroying cartilage. Ask your chiropractor for a suggested recommended dosage
- **EDUCATION** is intended to teach you coping skills. Reviewing and discussing your knowledge about your condition can make managing symptoms easier. With the necessary skills, you can learn to recognize your limitations and work within them.
- **SPA THERAPIES** include massage, mud therapy (mud packs), and balneotherapy (mineral baths) and other methods may relax the body and relieve stress. Though it is not known how mud therapy works, it is thought that there is some influence on hormone production that may affect osteoarthritis. Mineral baths may reduce pain and improve quality of life.
- **BRACES/ORTHOSIS** may be beneficial for the treatment of OA of the knee. How to find and use appropriate braces and orthotics, will be discussed with you by your Doctor of Chiropractic.
- **MANUAL THERAPIES** may be used in conjunction with your chiropractic treatments, and include joint mobilization and muscle stretching. These treatments are thought to decrease pain and stiffness
- **NUTRACEUTICALS** are thought to counteract stress, rid the body of toxins, and restore depleted vitamins and minerals. In addition to recommended supplements, there may also be recommended dietary changes as part of treatment for osteoarthritis. Depending on your particular case and your specific needs, additional and more personalized recommendations are likely to be made.

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- **THERMOTHERAPY** may include ultrasound, shortwave diathermy, cryotherapy, and heat therapy. If used in your care, these will either be applied in your chiropractors office or discussed with you to be applied at home.

### **YOUR ALTERNATIVES**

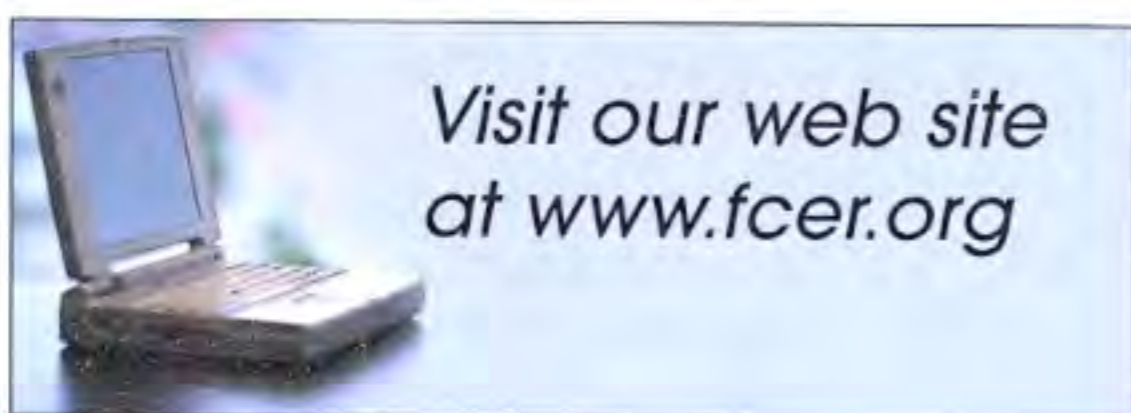
Your condition may be best treated using both chiropractic treatments and other treatments from allied healthcare professionals. If your condition requires it, a direct referral for treatment may be made to medical, surgical or other healthcare providers.

- **PHARMACOLOGIC TREATMENT** includes over-the-counter (OTC) medications and prescription medications. The most common OTC for osteoarthritis is acetaminophen, although some people may have better results from non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), which include naproxen sodium, ibuprofen, and aspirin. If medications are prescribed for you, the prescribing doctor can answer any questions you may have on possible side-effects and what to expect from treatment.
- **CORTICOSTEROID INJECTION** may provide short-term relief from pain. Benefits tend to be short-lived and there is a limit to the number of steroid injections you can receive each year. More details can be provided from the appropriate health care provider if you select this type of treatment.
- **SODIUM HYALURONATE INJECTION** involves injecting a synthetic version of normal joint fluid into the joint. Some people experience longer lasting pain relief than with the corticosteroid injections; unfortunately, some people do not experience relief.
- **TOTAL JOINT REPLACEMENT** is an option that if it becomes necessary, your Doctor of Chiropractic will refer you to an individual who specializes in that particular joint replacement.

### **Prevention of Osteoarthritis**

Prevention:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Protect joints from injury
- Exercise
- Eat correctly and take supplements if necessary for complete nutrition
- Maintain good posture



## **News & Views**

### **Reading, Games Help Keep Aging Memories Sharp**

Doing brain activities, such as reading or playing games, in middle age and later may help delay or prevent memory loss, according to new research. Participants were asked about their daily activities within the past year, as well as when they were between 50 and 65 years old. Those who read books, played games, used computers, and did crafts such as pottery or quilting in their later years were 30% to 50% less likely to develop memory loss than people who didn't do these kinds of mental activities. Participants who watched television for less than seven hours a day in their later years were 50 percent less likely to develop memory loss than those who watched television for more than seven hours a day. (*HealthDay News*. February 17, 2009)

### **Optimism Boosts Health, Life Span: Study**

Optimists live longer and healthier lives than pessimists, according to a U.S. study of 100,000 women who were surveyed about their personality traits and then followed for eight years. Those who said they were optimists were less likely to die from any cause and 30 percent less likely to die from heart disease. Women who were more pessimistic had a higher overall death rate and were 23 percent more likely to die from a cancer-related condition, *ABC News* reported. Optimistic people may have less physical reaction to stress, or may be more likely to follow a doctor's advice and, therefore, maintain their health, suggested lead author Hilary Tindle, an assistant professor of medicine at the University of Pittsburgh, the *AP* reported.

### **Companies Halt U.S. Sales of Baby Bottles With BPA**

Baby bottles made with the controversial chemical bisphenol A (BPA) will no longer be sold in the United States by the six largest manufacturers of the products. The companies made the announcement after Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal and other colleagues asked them to voluntarily halt their use of the chemical, which has been linked to numerous health effects. "The evidence seems too clear and emphatic and unequivocal to say we should simply permit this stuff to go into children on a massive scale," Blumenthal said Thursday. "And there's no reason for it, because there are substitutes available." BPA, which is found in a wide range of products, mimics the hormone estrogen and may disrupt the body's endocrine system. The chemical poses a particular threat to fetuses, infants and children because it can interfere with cell function when their bodies are still developing, public health experts say. (*HealthDay News*. March 6, 2009)



# Q: How can I avoid becoming an "exercise dropout?"

**A:** In spite of good intention, it is common to begin exercising regularly and then either gradually or abruptly stopping – ending up in the same physical condition as before exercising. It is a frustration experienced by nearly everyone that would like to begin an exercise program.

There are a few key factors, however, that may help people continue stretching and exercising throughout life. Among these factors is a clear understanding of the benefits of regular exercise. Short-term benefits may include overcoming an injury; long-term benefits may include remaining active and pain-free in the years to come.

Another key point is to stop believing you are being forced to do something unpleasant. Begin with an exercise that you enjoy and set attainable goals. Every time you exercise or stretch as planned, you are one step closer to creating your exercise habit. Interestingly enough, time can be your ally. We are creatures of habit. You can choose to have healthy habits.

In addition to enjoying your exercise program, the content, length, and frequency must be customized to your condition and the desired outcome. Your Doctor of Chiropractic can help you to understand the full benefits, customize your approach, and give ongoing support to enable you to move into a healthier lifestyle.

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