

Is your foot bone connected to your fish bone?

You bet. The secrets of feet, fish and what to do about a pain in the neck now available to everyone through special initiative of Arthritis Awareness Week – April 6-12, 2008.

“It might sound a bit obscure but a large proportion of the population has foot pain and aren’t sure what to do about it. A lot of people with joint pains of any kind have heard that fish oil might help but don’t know what to take and how much – in fact they’re often taking more expensive preparations than they need to and in too small a dose. And we all know a pain in the neck when one comes along – what’s the best thing to do?” asks Dr Mona Marabani, President of Arthritis Australia, launching a special initiative of Arthritis Awareness Week – April 6-12, 2008

“There’s quite a bit of evidence that if you have arthritis of some kind, just knowing about it and understanding your options can relieve the pain. So we’ve produced 29 information sheets on a variety of painful muscle and joint problems,” explains Dr Marabani. “And we’ve taken the best evidence from around the world to make the information utterly reliable.”

“Let’s take fish oil for example,” says Professor Les Cleland of the University of Adelaide. “Did you know that ten millilitres of fish oil a day on juice can reduce a person’s reliance on painkillers? It’s more than people usually take and as oil, it’s much cheaper than the capsules. Fish oil can also reduce the risk of sudden death due to a heart problem and on top of that they can probably lift your mood if you’re depressed. And there’s a lot more on the fact sheet besides.”

“Then there are the feet,” says Associate Professor Peter Youssef, senior staff rheumatologist at Sydney’s Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. “One of the most disabling forms of arthritis – and it doesn’t get talked about much – is in the feet. People can have pain in the ankles feet and toes making it hard to stand, walk and fit into their shoes because of the swelling. But there are things that can be done such as exercises which don’t stress the feet, hydrotherapy, fish oil, non-steroidal creams, getting properly fitting shoes, having a podiatrist make sure your nails are in good shape and even perhaps, hot and cold packs. The trick is knowing what’s available and works and that’s what these Arthritis Australia sheets do – and they’re available online as well.”

“Who’s never had a pain in the neck?” asks John Hart Associate Professor and emeritus consultant orthopaedic surgeon at Monash University/Alfred Hospital, Melbourne. “Would you believe that at any time, one in ten people have neck pain. That’s two million Australians. It’s important to know what kind of neck pain you have and what to do about it. Luckily it’s rarely due to anything serious and staying active is the thing to do. Our sheets tell you what you need to know to take control of your problem.”

Background

Arthritis Awareness Week

Is from Sunday April 6 to Saturday April 12 and the theme is “Arthritis – it’s your move.”

Arthritis Australia Information Sheets

Many people with arthritis say that learning about their condition and what they can do about it gives them back a feeling of control over their lives and a greater sense of confidence to manage their condition. To respond to this information gap, Arthritis Australia has joined forces with the Australian Rheumatology Association to produce an up-to-date, high quality and comprehensive set of information sheets to help consumers make informed decisions about health care and take an active role in self management. Based on the latest research, including the Cochrane Collection's systematic reviews, the sheets were written by a wide range of health professionals, including physiotherapists, rheumatologists, general practitioners and pharmacists. Consumers were involved in every step of the development of the information sheets, providing direction for the range of topics covered in the collection as well as reviewing the sheets to ensure they were accessible for people with varying levels of health literacy and knowledge about arthritis. There are also sheets on all the common forms of arthritis as well as lesser known forms such as psoriatic arthritis, spondyloarthritis, lupus, fibromyalgia and polymyalgia rheumatica with some information provided in Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian and Vietnamese.

Other new or updated materials available:

- *10 steps for living well with arthritis* booklet
- Disease-specific booklets on osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis and psoriatic arthritis
- Medicines information sheets on the most common medications prescribed for arthritis
- Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian and Vietnamese translated information sheets on What is arthritis; Dealing with pain; Healthy eating and physical activity; Medicines and arthritis; Working with your healthcare team

For your free information pack call the Arthritis Infoline on 1800 678 988 (toll free). All of the materials are also available for download from Arthritis Australia’s website
<http://www.arthritisaustralia.com.au/Awareness%20Week>

Arthritis

There are over 100 different forms of arthritis but the commonest are osteoarthritis (OA), which is largely due to wear and tear, gout, where crystals of a substance called uric acid are deposited in some joints like those in the big toe, rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and ankylosing spondylitis which are autoimmune conditions and rarer forms of arthritis usually secondary to other problems like psoriasis.

Just under four million Australians have arthritis and if you’re over 80, the chances of having arthritis are one in two. And of the \$24 billion dollars arthritis costs each year in health care, lost time at work, shortened lives and years spent with disability, over 60% are carried by the people with arthritis themselves

Arthritis Australia

As the peak body for arthritis, Arthritis Australia is responsible for promoting awareness, early diagnosis and early intervention to improve and preserve sufferers' quality of life. In collaboration with its state and territory Affiliates it is providing a range of awareness, education and support services, as well as managing a national arthritis research program. However, gaps in service delivery have been identified and action is being sought to build capacity and reduce incidence and associated costs. Priorities include:

- Increasing awareness and education activities
- Increasing consumer knowledge of treatments available and improving access to allied health services
- Ensuring quality use of medicines as well as access to appropriate medications to retard joint damage
- Maintaining quality services by evaluating consumer needs and service delivery

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