



Anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving herbs

Coping with chronic joint pain is something an estimated 10 million of us deal with every day in the UK. While some people have conditions they have grown up with, for many the onset is gradual and we are all familiar with the spike in joint aches and pains as we get older.

Fortunately, for many of us, we can make a difference. While increasingly long waiting lists for physiotherapy appointments can make some people feel despondent, we can also take matters into our own hands.

There can't be a reader of Holistic Magazine Scotland who hasn't heard about the benefits of turmeric. This golden coloured root from South East Asia is reputed to have a list of health benefits as long as your aching arms!

But what we have to remember is that although turmeric does indeed have some well-researched

health credentials, many of the studies involve populations who include turmeric in their daily diets over decades. Turmeric is actually very poorly absorbed in the gut – adding it to all your meals now and expecting great changes in a flash is unlikely to happen. Instead, look for a product that has black pepper added (which helps increase the bioavailability of the turmeric) and with a high count of curcumin.

Now, as a traditional herbalist I am not often one to suggest supplementation with standardised extracts – we use traditionally prepared whole plant

extracts – and for good reason! However, in this case, it really is worth it. The main active ingredient has significant anti-inflammatory properties that can help reduce joint pain for some people.

Another of our key allies is the humble nettle leaf. Picked fresh in spring, or used dried the year round, nettle binds to excess uric acid that can exacerbate joint pain and helps our body to excrete it safely. This ubiquitous plant plays an important role in reducing acidity which can be one of the reasons for joint pain.

In clinic I notice that many patients with arthritis have highly acidic diets – they may look like otherwise healthy diets, but when there is joint pain it is crucial to eliminate the most acidic foods like tomato (especially concentrated), oranges (particularly concentrated juice) and cured meats like ham, bacon and salami. Often just taking these out of the diet and drinking nettle tea 2-3 times a day can make a huge difference.

For those who need more complex assistance medical herbalists use herbs such as devil's claw to reduce joint pain, tree of life as a useful anti-inflammatory and our native bogbean for tendonitis. Chronic joint pain is no laughing matter. If you are suffering, save on countless over the counter purchases and get bespoke advice for your situation from your local medical herbalist.



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She has been regularly spotted in films and on TV and is the sole herbal advisor to Twinings International. Find out more at pamelaspence.co.uk or find Pamela on Facebook at [facebook.com/PamelaSpenceHerbalist](https://www.facebook.com/PamelaSpenceHerbalist)
To find a medical herbalist in your area, go to nimh.org.uk

