

tame the pain

LEARN HOW THE CURVES PROGRAM SHEDS POUNDS, BOOSTS ENERGY—AND HELPS

ARTHRITIC JOINTS. ○ BY PORTER SHIMER

Like gray hair, osteoarthritis (OA) is one of the dues we pay for living longer. “Like the shock absorbers of your car, the cartilage responsible for providing cushioning within the body’s joints can begin to wear out, causing varying degrees of stiffness and pain,” says Richard B. Kreider, PhD, FACSM (Fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine), professor and chair of the Exercise and Sport Nutrition Lab in the Department of Health, Human Performance, and Recreation at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Kreider and his team of researchers have been studying the Curves program since fall 2002. Recently, the researchers began to study how the Curves exercise and diet program might help minimize effects of this disease.

Putting Logic to the Test

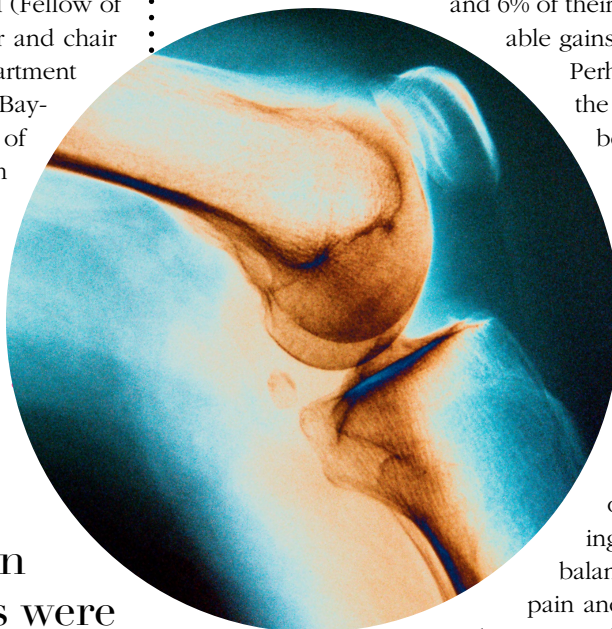
“We’ve known for some time that weight loss can help reduce the effects of osteoarthritis, especially when the condition affects weight-bearing joints such as the hips, back, and knees,” says Kreider. “Research has also shown that moderate, low-impact exercise may be beneficial by helping to provide the muscular strength joints need for support, so it seemed only logical that the Curves program should provide sufferers with significant relief.”

Then, too, there’s been evidence that a natural dietary supplement known as glucosamine chondroitin may help restore the cartilage that becomes damaged by osteoarthritis. Kreider and his team are testing the benefits of this supplement in their study, too. Thirty overweight women between the ages of 18 and 70 with OA of the knee were asked to participate in the standard Curves exercise and diet program for 14 weeks. Half were given a special Curves-formulated glucosamine chondroitin supplement three

times daily, while the other 15 exercisers were given a placebo. After 14 weeks, these two groups were compared.

The results? All of the women with OA who had participated in the Curves program lost an average of 3% of their body weight and 6% of their fat, and made considerable gains in muscular strength.

Perhaps the biggest news was the major improvement that both groups experienced in their osteoarthritis as measured by decreases in pain and stiffness as well as increases in leg strength, knee flexibility, and the ability to do functional exercise tasks that involved sitting up, stepping up and over an object, and lunging forward to catch and balance their weight. Knee pain and stiffness were reduced by 52% and 38%, respectively, and physical functioning improved by 46%.



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Supplementing Success

As for the 15 women who had been given glucosamine chondroitin in addition to taking part in the Curves program, improvements to their osteoarthritis of the knee appeared to be even greater. “There were several significant differences and a number of strong statistical trends in terms of reduced perception of pain, improved strength, and enhanced flexibility that indicated the supplement may be helpful against this condition,” says Kreider. “To say with more certainty, however, we’ll need further research.” Consider trying the Curves Joint & Connective Tissue Support supplement to see if glucosamine chondroitin works for you.

The bottom line? The Curves diet and exercise program appears to be very effective at keeping osteoarthritis at bay. ●

PORTER SHIMER specializes in writing about health and fitness.