

# The Wellness Express™

Jump on the train to good health

Issue 2, August 2011

## Healing Herbs for Pain and Inflammation

### Presented by:

When you injure yourself, your body takes action to heal the wounded or damaged areas. You might think it counterintuitive, but inflammation is actually a necessary part of your body's recovery process. Without some inflammation, wounds would never heal.

If inflammation becomes severe or chronic, then serious health problems can emerge. Arthritis, asthma, and colitis are just a few of the health conditions classified as inflammatory diseases.

However, are drugs the only solution to dealing with the problems of inflammation? New research reveals that some spices, including those you might find in a household spice rack, might actually work as well as traditional drugs.

### Frankincense

You may only know of frankincense (*boswellia*) from the biblical story of the three wise men, but there is a lot more to the tale of frankincense. It was one of the most popular medicinal remedies of the ancient world, and its healing legacy continues today.

Several species of the frankincense tree grow in East Africa, Saudi Arabia and India. While most herbal remedies usually make use of leaves and roots, frankincense's medicinal ingredient is the gummy resin found inside the frankincense tree. Today, you can purchase frankincense in supplement form for therapeutic use. It is popular for helping diminish the symptoms of arthritis.

Anti-inflammatory medications used in arthritis treatment often come with serious side effects, which can lower the quality of life for many arthritis sufferers, but several studies have noted that frankincense has few side effects and appears safe for long-term use.

This year scientists at Cardiff University in the United Kingdom used an extract derived from the frankincense species *boswellia frereana* and discovered the substance has the ability to block pro-inflammatory molecules and prevent the breakdown of cartilage tissue.<sup>1</sup>

An earlier study published in *Arthritis Research & Therapy* showed patients with osteoarthritis in the knee who received a frankincense supplement derived from *boswellia serrata* saw improvement in less than seven days.<sup>2</sup>

### Exercise of the Week

Low Back Stabilization in Reverse Bridge Position with Hamstring Curls (single leg)

Difficulty: Advanced

(Consult your Chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise)

Start: : Lie on back, lower legs resting on ball, knees straight. Hands can rest on hips with elbows touching floor. Press down into ball with legs, lifting hips until entire body is in straight position, feet to shoulders. Stabilize with stomach tucked in and hold. Lift one leg a few inches off ball, stabilizing with only one leg on ball.

Exercise: Roll ball toward buttocks using one leg. As ball comes closer to buttocks, hips should rise but not bend, keeping a straight line between knee, hips and shoulders. Curl leg to 90 degrees and hold for 1 count. Return to start position; maintain a tight abdomen throughout. Repeat 5-10 times per leg.



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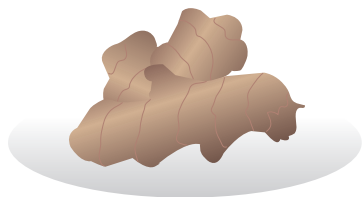
Two medical researchers remarked in a frankincense study published in *Phytotherapy Research*, “Due to its efficacy we propose that *boswellia frereana* should be examined further as a potential therapeutic agent for treating inflammatory symptoms associated with arthritis.”<sup>3</sup>

## Ginger

Originally from Asia, this popular spice spread west via trade routes to the ancient Roman Empire. Today, it is a staple ingredient in meals across the globe, but it also has a long history in traditional herbal medicine. Healers prescribed it for gastrointestinal problems, flu and arthritis.

Over the last three decades, medical investigators have studied the therapeutic effects of ginger. Early research discovered it shares some of the pharmacological properties of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like aspirin, but with far fewer side effects. Researchers believe that ginger lowers levels of prostaglandins – a compound derived from fatty acids that influences pain signals.

A 2005 study in *The Journal of Medicinal Food* saw medical researchers remark that ginger “inhibits the induction of several genes involved in the inflammatory response” and “modulates biochemical pathways involved in chronic inflammation.”<sup>4</sup>



Ginger is shown to be effective on pain and inflammation caused by exercise-induced muscle injury. In research that appeared in *The Journal of Pain*, participants engaged in numerous exercises designed to induce muscle pain. One group of participants received a placebo pill, and another group received ginger supplements. At the end of the study, the ginger group reduced their muscle pain by as much as 25%.<sup>5</sup>

## Turmeric

Turmeric is a yellow spice popular in Indian curries. As with many spices from this area of the world, it is also used medicinally. Turmeric’s anti-inflammatory properties should not come as much of a surprise because it is part of the ginger family.

A study conducted by Arizona University College of Medicine supported the hypothesis of ginger blocking production of inflammatory substances and this action may help prevent rheumatoid arthritis.<sup>6</sup>



How quickly these herbal remedies provide relief can vary. Some people notice improvements within a few days, while for others it may take several weeks. If you have gallstones or bile duct conditions, do not use ginger or turmeric. Consult your chiropractor before using herbal supplements, especially if you take medication or you are pregnant or breast feeding.

## Quote to Inspire

***“There’s nothing wrong with making mistakes. Just don’t respond with encores.”***  
- Anonymous

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