

SHOULD I TRY GLUCOSAMINE AND CHONDROITIN FOR ARTHRITIC PAIN?

Most news reports announced that the popular tag team of glucosamine and chondroitin did little to alleviate pain in people with mild to moderate knee osteoarthritis (OA) following the Glucosamine/Chondroitin Arthritis Intervention Trial (GAIT) study, a large scale study of 1583 patients conducted by NIH. The supplements touted as improving mobility and reducing joint discomfort proved less effective than either placebo or a prescription medication and the surprise was followed by disappointment among those with arthritis.

Closer analysis found something interesting that got lost in the news reports: a small subgroup of people with moderate to severe pain did get significant pain relief. Because the study had an imbalance of people with mild pain- there were 20 times more people in the study with mild pain than with moderate- to- sever pain- their experience dominated the results.

The take home message according to Arthritis magazine and Dr. Moskowitz, professor of medicine at Case Western Reserve University is that “a three-month trial is reasonable for people who have a lot of pain. If it’s working, by all means continue using them, as these supplements are extremely safe.”
By the way, a second part of the GAIT study in which knee x-rays were taken to measure preservation of joint space in the participants will be available in 2007. Please consult with your physician before taking any supplements.