Fact or Fiction Part 2: Magnetic Bracelets, Arthroscopic Surgery, Ice vs. Heat Glucosamine, and Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Key Points and References

Will glucosamine help my arthritis?
- UNCERTAIN
- There is currently not enough evidence to support or refute this claim
- Results from current research trends towards improvements in pain, function, and increasing joint space, but there is nothing conclusive yet
- Glucosamine appears safe for most people, but be sure to check with your doctor before trying it, especially if you have diabetes

Will omega-3 fatty acids help with the inflammation associated with arthritis?
- UNCERTAIN
- Inflammation can make joints swollen, red and painful
- Omega-3 fatty acids have been shown to decrease joint inflammation for people with rheumatoid arthritis
- Research shows that there may be similar effects for people with osteoarthritis, but more human research is needed
- Fatty fish, like salmon and sardines, flaxseed and walnuts are excellent sources of omega-3 fatty acids
  - It can also be taken as a nutritional supplement
- Check with a nutritionist and/or doctor about the amount you should take to reduce joint pain

Will copper bracelets help my arthritis?
- NO!!
- There is no evidence to support that a copper or magnetic bracelet is any better than a placebo bracelet

Will arthroscopic surgery help my arthritis?
- NO!
Evidence shows that people who get arthroscopic surgery (including removal of scar tissue, or rinsing of the joint) do NO better than those who do not get surgery after 1 year
  ○ This is in terms of function and pain
In fact, most people who get arthroscopic surgery have more initial pain after the surgery

Which is better, ice or heat?
Heat promotes inflammation--the process associated with arthritis--and so may not be appropriate for people with arthritis
Using a hot pack can loosen up the joint and make it feel better for a short period of time
Ice decreases inflammation and has been shown to reduce swelling and improve muscle function around a swollen joint
  ○ Ice may be especially helpful during a flare-up when the joint is swollen
Effects from both ice and heat are small and temporary
In general, do what feels good to you, but avoid heat during flare-ups or when the joint is swollen

Online resources

10 things you should know about glucosamine:
http://osteoarthritis.about.com/od/alternativetreatments/a/glucosamine.htm
Overview of omega-3 fatty acids:
http://www.umm.edu/altmed/articles/omega-3-000316.htm
How omega-3 fatty acids can reduce inflammation:

References


