

## Can Glucosamine and Chondroitin Supplements Relieve My Arthritis?



**A**bout 10 million Americans suffer from osteoarthritis (OA), a painful condition in which the cushioning cartilage between bones wears away. To ease pain, OA sufferers often take supplements, the best known being **glucosamine** and **chondroitin sulfate**. Glucosamine is thought to inhibit inflammation and stimulate cartilage cell growth, while chondroitin may strengthen cartilage and increase its resilience. Thus, they may actually impact the degeneration process.

Available without a prescription, glucosamine and chondroitin are usually taken as one tablet by mouth and are well tolerated. The most commonly reported side effects include nausea, diarrhea or constipation, heartburn and increased intestinal gas.

There are some contraindications, however.

- **People with diabetes should use caution when taking glucosamine because it may raise blood sugar.**
- **Those taking blood-thinning medication (anticoagulants) should also check with their doctors before taking these supplements.**
- **Because glucosamine is extracted from a substance in shellfish, people allergic to shellfish should consult their doctors before using a glucosamine and chondroitin supplement.**
- **Glucosamine and chondroitin are not recommended for children, women who are pregnant and women who could become pregnant.**

Before taking these supplements, check with your doctor to review other medications you are taking and help you decide if glucosamine and chondroitin are right for you.

Studies of the benefits of glucosamine and chondroitin have been inconclusive, but research regarding exercise is not! Exercise remains one of the best treatments for OA. We can design an individual program of exercises, which will help keep your joints flexible, the muscles around the joints strong, bone and cartilage tissue strong and healthy, and reduce pain.