Breaks for the Aches

Readily accessible food and nutrients can remedy muscle

December 1, 1997 By Raya Miller

PWA JT Johnson of Amarillo, Texas says, “Waking up every morning feeling like I’d been rode hard and put up wet sure didn’t start the day off right.” For you non-Texans, that means he ached all over, and he’s not the only one with the problem. Muscle inflammation (myositis) that causes aches and pains is common in PWAs, and can stem from either HIV itself or the use of AZT.

This condition is a good possibility when the aches you feel after working out seem excessive for the amount or kind of exercise you did. Other indicators are general soreness, achiness or cramp-like feelings with no obvious cause. Luckily there are several non-toxic food and nutrient remedies.

Get fat. Certain essential fatty acids (EFAs)-components of the fats in your body-can work well to control inflammation. In particular, the omega-3 fatty acids found in flaxseed (linseed), canola, soybean, pumpkin, walnut and fish oils are generally anti-inflammatory. Unfortunately, many PWAs are deficient in EFAs because of problems created by the HIV disease process with digestion, uptake and usage of fats. EFAs can be increased by using canola, pumpkin, soybean and walnut oils in cooking (but not in deep-frying, which destroys their nutrients) or on salads, and eating several helpings of fatty fishes like salmon, herring, mackeral and sardines every week. Taking two to six capsules of flaxseed or fish oil daily can also help; Johnson says: “I consider it a lube job for the muscles. I no longer feel old and creaky.”

Eat your veggies. Bioflavonoids, especially quercetin, are recommended by many nutritionists for their powerful anti-inflammatory effects. Bioflavonoids are found in citrus fruits, buckwheat, green peppers, broccoli, tomatoes, apples, cherries, apricots, grapes, currants, plums, blackberries and papayas, as well as tea, whether black or green. In supplemental form, doses of 500-2,000 mg of quercetin daily are often effective.

Andrew Weil, MD, author of Spontaneous Healing and many other books, also recommends ginger as a highly effective natural anti-inflammatory. In powdered form, the usual dose is two to six capsules daily. Equally effective is drinking fresh-brewed ginger tea. Chop one tablespoon of ginger root; add to boiling water and steep 10 minutes.

Sideline side-effects. AZT sometimes causes myositis that results in muscle weakness, cramp-like symptoms and muscle wasting. L-carnitine is an amino acid that is normally found in high

levels in muscles but is decreased in those on AZT. Now being studies as a treatment for AZT-induced myositis, supplemental L-carnitine seems to help reverse these muscle problems. The richest sources of L-carnitine are red meats and, to a lesser degree, fish, poultry and dairy. The recommended dose of three to six grans of L-carnitine daily is costly, but try the prescription form (Carnitor) if you have drug coverage.

These natural therapies have helped many PWAs eliminate the aches that make them feel 90. After all, the goal is to live to a ripe old age iwth HIV, but not feel like it.

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