

## Arthritis an Overview

There are over 100 different forms of arthritis with over 54.4 million (22.7%) people diagnosed with some form of this disease from 2013-2015. Osteoarthritis is the most common affecting one in three adults more in women than in men. (1) If you are suffering from arthritis you can manage and heal your body with self education, lifestyle and dietary changes. Acupuncture has the ability to strengthen your body, increase blood circulation and allow for the free movement of energy in the body. Let's take a look at some of the causes of arthritis to better understand how acupuncture and lifestyle changes can help this problem.

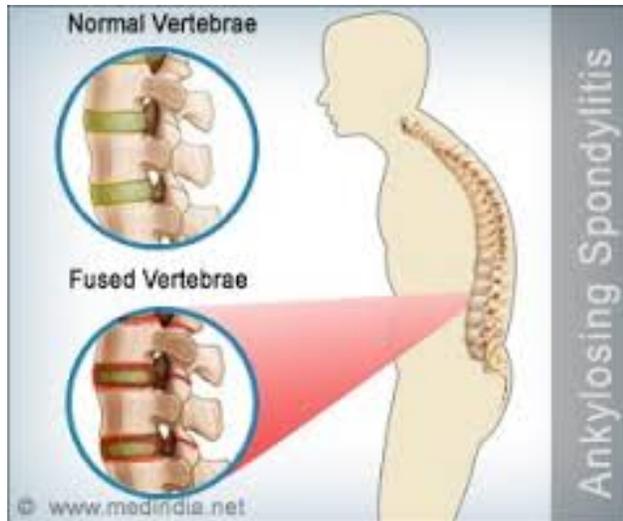
Most of us have all heard of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis and less commonly material arthritis. But what do these terms mean? Well, Inflammation of a joint usually accompanied by pain, swelling and stiffness can result from infection, trauma, degenerative changes with aging, metabolic disturbances or even genetic weakness. Did you know that fibromyalgia is also classified as a form of arthritis? Rheumatoid arthritis, Ankylosing spondylitis, SLE or lupus are associated with an autoimmune dysfunction but for the sake of this discussion we will focus on the more common form called *Osteoarthritis* which is associated with degenerative joint disease and can be understood with a little knowledge of how the body functions:

Our bones are covered with a substance called cartilage and deterioration of cartilage causes bone to rub on bone which results in inflammation and pain. It is made up of a protein substance that serves as a cushion between bones and joints and usually this affects the *hands, feet, spine, large weight bearing joints such as hips and knees*. Of course repetitive use, damp cold climates and diet also speed up this process as does distortion of the skeletal structure. This is an important point to consider, for example, If you can imagine the left side of your pelvis being higher than the right side, meaning that your centre of gravity is tilted downward to the right. Now the weight bearing joints are also leaning on one another with less joint space on the right side. Over time this rubbing continues to wear down the protective cushioning ( that protein substance mentioned above) and what can happen is that the body in it's infinite intelligence decides to create a calcium deposit known as a bone spur or osteophyte. Why? Because it is trying to substitute bone wearing down further but unfortunately these osteophytes often press on nerves causing more discomfort in some cases. Diagnosis is usually through an Xray or CT or MRI scan. They can occur in muscles, ligaments and tendons and may or may not cause symptoms.

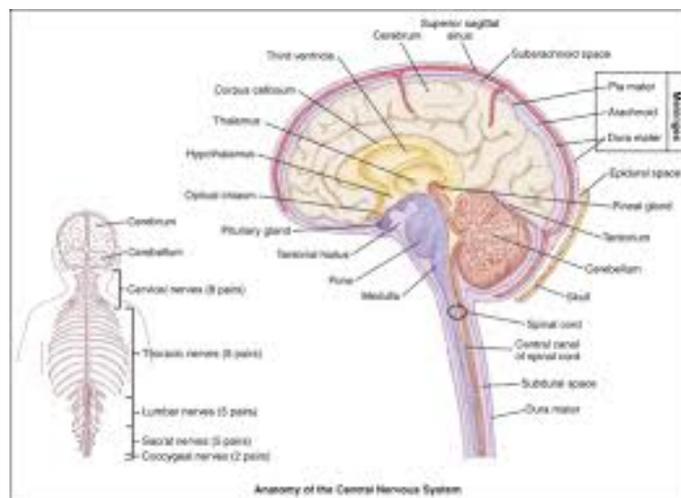


**Normal and Arthritic Joints**

When one's correct posture is restored there are numerous positive effects on the body, including recovery from disease. (2). Structural acupuncture helps to reduce inflammation and begin *repair* of soft tissues. This I have seen clinically over the years in my teacher, Dr. Maekawa's clinic as well as my own clinic and have been amazed at how patients recover when they are willing to make their health a priority and decide that they are ready to heal. It takes commitment and patience because our body needs time to readjust and function in a different way. Remember that our bodies are amazing '*machines*' that continue to function even when we overuse, stress ourselves on a daily basis, eat and drink foods that cause inflammation and so on.... Having said that, I have seen changes happen in as little as one week when patients are also ready to make simple life style changes such as cutting back on sugar or not drinking that nightly glass of wine! On another note, our joints are the dumping ground of toxins when it doesn't know where to eliminate certain molecules, peptides or proteins that are causing stress on the internal mechanisms of the body. Ankylosing Spondylitis is a condition of chronic inflammation of the spine and sacroiliac joints causing pain and stiffness in and around the spine. Over time this inflammation can lead to fusion of the vertebrae and loss of mobility of the spine as well as pain. As acupuncture increases blood circulation it helps with relaxation of the tissues and increased mobility.



Fibromyalgia causes widespread pain and affects the muscles and attachments to the bones. Fatigue and sleep disturbances, anxiety and depression affect 1.75% or 3.94m people in the United States. (3) The pain suffered in these patients can be reduced significantly over time with continued treatments. The beauty of Oriental medicine is that it has the capacity to treat pain whether physically or psycho emotionally related. It's aim is to always treat the root as well as the branch which brings me to another area of **how** acupuncture works! It's not just magic or voodoo! In fact physics and neurology best describes the mechanisms of acupuncture. When a tiny filiform needle is inserted into the skin several mechanisms are activated in the body via the spinal cord. This is also why I work on the back of the body especially on the contracted muscles which are usually visible more so on one side. 1. The local effect or vasodilation (blood circulation activation and immune response) 2. Spinal segmental mechanism 3. Endogenous opioid circuit which disrupts the pain circuit mechanism 4. Central nervous system activation. 5. Neuromuscular activation. This may all sound technical but to simplify we can understand the brain as being the most powerful pharmaceutical manufacturer in the world with as many neurons as stars in the sky all firing together to signal your body to repair itself. (4)



As an acupuncturist practicing structural acupuncture or *Seitai Shinpo* which is a little known form of acupuncture taught to only a handful of practitioners by Dr. Chieko Maekawa in Hawaii, I have learned and continue to learn from my patients that we are all unique, each of us with individual hopes, dreams and lives, family histories, relationships and beliefs. The common ground that we all share is that we desire happiness no matter what the outward appearance. We all seek acceptance and belonging in one form or another and as we live life our bodies continue to mirror to us where we are at in terms of mental and physical health. We all experience pain to one degree or another at sometime in our lives. It is an indicator reflecting resistance to '*what is*' in our world regardless of whether or not we have knowledge of medicine. It is what makes us human and as humans in a physical body we have the power to heal ourselves and acupuncture has that ability to signal those changes in a positive way.

1. [Cdc.gov/arthritis/data\\_statistics/arthritis-related-stats.htm](http://Cdc.gov/arthritis/data_statistics/arthritis-related-stats.htm).
2. Seitai Shinpo acupuncture for musculoskeletal disease, MaekawaCJ. Ch 1.2 pg.5.
3. The prevalence and characteristics of Fibromyalgia in the 2012 National health interview survey. WalittB, NahinRL, KatzRS, BergmanMJ, WolfeF. 2015 Sept 17.
4. [Neuropuncture.org](http://Neuropuncture.org) Dr. Corradino, L.Ac., DAOM, MTOM.