

# Arthritis Drugs Explained

There are over one hundred different types of arthritis. It's a staggering fact, but it does help to explain why not every drug is effective for all arthritis patients.

If you suffer from arthritis, you're aware of the seemingly endless list of drugs that are said to offer relief from the pain and inflammation that you endure on a daily basis. What you may not know, however, is how each of these drugs is different, or how they are meant to treat your disease. The purpose of this article is to present some of the basic types of medications that are widely available to you, and to offer information on possible solutions to your problems stemming from arthritis.

## Analgesics

The pain associated with arthritis can be extremely severe, and most patients turn to pain medications to help relieve their suffering. When the pain gets to be too much to bear, doctors will prescribe strong painkillers called analgesics. Codeine, darvocet, percocet, vicodin and Tylenol are all commonly prescribed analgesics. While these medications will help to take the edge off of the pain of arthritis, they are not effective in reducing or stopping inflammation.

## Biologic Response Modifier

One class of medication that is rather unique in terms of the way it is used for arthritis is the Biologic Response Modifiers, or BRMs. This type of drug is not created in a laboratory, but is derived from living sources to help treat certain aspects of arthritis. There are numerous BRMs available that offer various benefits to people with arthritis. BRMs can decrease inflammation, increase the T-cells in the body, and use a special type of protein to block the harmful affects of rheumatoid arthritis.

## Corticosteroids

Many people with arthritis turn to corticosteroids for relief from their symptoms. These drugs work by reducing swelling and inflammation in the arthritic areas, thus relieving pain and loosening stiff joints. Doctors will often prescribe corticosteroids to reduce the inflammation in joints and organs caused by rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and vasculitis. Since these drugs are steroidal, and very similar to a compound that is naturally produced by the adrenal glands, that dosage will vary depending on the individual patient. When used over a long period of time, or in too high a dosage, corticosteroids can actually create long-term complications.

## DMARDs

Disease Modifying Anti-rheumatic Drugs (DMARDs) are often prescribed in order to help treat the problems of arthritis. These compounds act slowly, allowing their effects on arthritis to gradually strengthen over the course of a few weeks. DMARDs can help to stop the progression of several types of arthritis, including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, and ankylosing spondylitis. Using these drugs over an extended period of time can actually end the damage to the affected joint, so they are a great option for those patients suffering from rheumatoid arthritis.

## NSAIDs

Among the most commonly prescribed types of drugs for arthritis are Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs). These drugs are taken to reduce the inflammation of the affected area to a minimum. The feelings of pain and stiffness are decreased, and the joint may in turn have an extended range of motion. Many common, over-the-counter drugs fall under the category of NSAIDs, including ibuprofen, aspirin and Celebrex.

Remember, there are more than one hundred different types of arthritis, so don't assume that what worked for your brother, or friend, or coworker will necessarily work for you. Always be sure to consult with your doctor before starting any regime of drugs for arthritis. Be sure to understand what you are taking, how each medication should be taken, and whether there is the possibility of side effects or complications.