

Health

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ARTHRITIS TROUBLES REPAIRING JOINTS

A return to motion

Ankle-replacement procedure can restore mobility

By Susan Bloom
For NJ Press Media

Thirty years ago, when she was 35, Patricia Brennan broke her left ankle while playing soccer with her son.

Doctors inserted a pin and plate, which they removed after a year to allow Brennan's ankle to permanently heal, and her ankle proved fine for decades. But while she assumed that the ordeal was behind her, the full fallout was yet to come.

Over the years, her responsibilities as a mother, primary caregiver to her parents, and nurse's aide in a busy hospital where she was often on her feet for 12 hours at a time put pressure on her ankle to the point where, roughly five years ago, walking and other normal activities became difficult and painful.

"I tried everything for the pain — Advil and Celebrex, hot packs, a Lidoderm patch, and injections — but nothing lasted," said Brennan, who lives in the Bayville section of Berkeley. "They all offered temporary relief but nothing permanent."

In 2010, Brennan suffered another setback when she slipped at work and injured her bad ankle. By that time, she said, "I could feel bone on bone," and an X-ray and MRI confirmed the reason. Her ankle, which had experienced progressive deterioration over the years, had become arthritic.

According to Dr. Shane Hollawell, a foot and ankle specialist with the Orthopaedic Institute of Central Jersey and a fellow of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS), Brennan's specific condition, known as post-traumatic arthritis, is a very common form of arthritis brought on by an injury or repetitive motion.

"Arthritis represents a breakdown in the articular surface (cartilage) that allows joints to glide and move in a pain-free manner and without restriction," Hollawell said. "Much like a pothole on



Dr. Shane Hollawell, a foot and ankle specialist at the Orthopaedic Institute of Central Jersey in Wall, consults with Patricia Brennan about her ankle replacement, a procedure he performed in 2010. MARY FRANK/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Minimal surgical scarring is visible along Brennan's foot.

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HEALTHFUL CHOICES NATURE'S NUTRIENTS

Don't overdo it with 'super foods'

By Barb Berggoetz :: Gannett

Super foods — hype or the real deal? Both, actually.

It seems everywhere you turn — from cookbooks to grocery shelves — the term "power" or "super" foods is being used to tout healthier eating. Some marketers and food manufacturers wrongly use the term when anything in their products offers a nutritional boost. So be wary.

But certain foods definitely pack a stronger punch of valuable nutrients that help fight off diseases and improve overall health in a host of ways, say dietary experts.

That's the upside to super or power foods — anything from blueberries and broccoli to nuts and quinoa.

There can be a potential downside to these food jewels. Eating them doesn't allow you to ignore other bad dietary habits, such as chowing down on too many steaks or indulging in lots of sweets.

Just because these foods are good for you doesn't mean you can eat endless amounts of them, either. More is not always better. It's not as big a deal with such low-calorie foods as spinach or kiwi fruit. But it is a big deal when you're talking about high-fat almonds or avocados — often considered super foods.

"Even though something is a super food, we still need to be

cognizant of the amount of calories we eat in a day's time," said Margie Fougerson, a registered dietitian. "Portion size is still important because of the caloric density of some foods."

That said, dietitians believe people are going to be less likely to overeat most of the nutrient-dense super foods just because many tend to fill you up.

So, how do you know what is a super food?

The federal government has no defined standards. No definitive list exists, either. Many foods are touted by health groups and dietary experts as super or power foods. Some, such as berries and broccoli, are often named. Certain foods, such as eggs, are on some lists, but not others.

Sometimes, more unusual items, such as hemp seeds, tiny chia seeds, gold-berries and goji berries, are cited.

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People's Pharmacy

By Joe Graedon
& Teresa Graedon

Oxygen therapy for headaches

Q. Although this might sound like pseudoscience, I've found oxygen to be a godsend for treating migraines.

A headache specialist can prescribe a tank of oxygen. It's a bit cumbersome because you have to keep a tank and hoses handy, but at the very first sign of a migraine or cluster headache, take in about 4 liters per minute of oxygen. The sooner you begin treating at the onset of a headache (during the "halo" stage preferably, before the pain starts), the better this method works. It does not work for everybody; it seems to work better for cluster headaches than for classic migraines.

A. Oxygen treatment for cluster headaches is not pseudoscience. A study in the Journal of the American Medical Association (Dec. 9, 2009) found that inhaled high-flow oxygen frequently resulted in pain relief within 15 minutes. This treatment was significantly more effective than inhaling plain air with the same equipment. The value of oxygen therapy for migraine headaches, on the other hand, remains controversial.

Q. My doctor said that the PM pain relievers I take to help me sleep are not habit-forming. I am starting to wonder about that, though. They are not as effective as they were, and I have had some confusion and impaired judgment I attribute to these medications.

Is there a mild medication that will do the job without side effects?

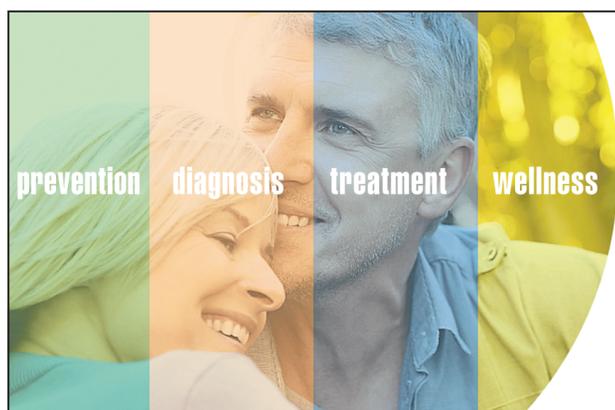
A. Sleep experts have told us that the antihistamine diphenhydramine, the ingredient in most PM painkillers, loses effectiveness with repeated use. It also can leave some people with a morning "hangover" or cause confusion and fuzzy thinking (Journal of Clinical Psychopharmacology, December 2010).

You might want to try nondrug approaches to overcoming your insomnia. Exercise during the day can be helpful, as can a hot bath in the evening. Taking melatonin at bedtime sometimes helps, and for a longer-term solution, cognitive behavioral therapy has been shown to work.

Q. I am in my 70s and, like many seniors, must take several medications. Mine make me constipated. I am taking MiraLax but still have bleeding hemorrhoids occasionally. Will a sitz bath help?

A. Sitting in warm water several times a day (a sitz bath) can ease the discomfort from an acute flare-up of hemorrhoids. But avoiding constipation would be more helpful. Check with your doctor to see if there are substitutes for your medicines.

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