

JUICE FOR THE *JOINTS*

Research shows that supplementation with Borage Oil may reduce arthritis pain and reduce the need for harmful anti-inflammatory drugs

By Artur Klimaszewski, MD

ARTHRITIS IS AN INFLAMMATORY condition of the joints that affects more than 37 million Americans – that's one in every seven people.¹ Arthritis is a debilitating disease that has a dramatic impact on the life of the victim, affecting everything from the ability to take care of day-to-day tasks to holding a steady job. Indeed, of people affected by arthritis, 70% are classified as moderately to severely disabled in their ability to perform normal activities.²

There are more than 100 types of arthritis, including Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Spinal Arthritis, Gout, and Lupus. The painful and crippling symptoms of these diseases lead sufferers to seek relief in a variety of forms.

The most common source of relief is through both prescrip-

tion and over-the-counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Examples of NSAIDs include Aspirin, indomethacin (Indocid), ibuprofen (Motrin), naproxen (Naprosyn), piroxicam (Feldene), and nabumeton (Relafen). Although these drugs provide the necessary pain relief, some 10-50% of patients are unable to tolerate long-term NSAID treatment due to side effects. Those side effects include abdominal pain, diarrhea, bloating, heartburn, and upset stomach. Close to 30% of patients on long-term NSAID treatment develop ulcers of the stomach, which can lead to severe bleeding and death.³

Evidently, many patients require a gentler form of treatment that remains effective against arthritic pain and will allow them to reduce their usage

of NSAIDs.

Studies done in the last 15 years show that dietary supplementation with Gamma Linolenic Acid (GLA) reduces the clinical symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis. Furthermore, animal studies show that GLA protects the stomach lining against gastric acid. This anti-ulcerogenic effect can reduce the side effects of NSAIDs taken in conjunction with GLA therapy.⁴

GLA is a naturally occurring fatty acid found in Borage (also known as Starflower) Oil, Evening Primrose Oil, and Black Currant Oil. While long-term supplementation with GLA has proven effective against the symptoms of arthritis, it has none of the dangerous side effects associated with NSAIDs.

The effects of GLA on Rheumatoid Arthritis

Over the last 15 years, researchers have performed several clinical studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of GLA on the symptoms of Rheumatoid Arthritis. Early studies used relatively low dosages with some success. For example, as early as 1988, researchers confirmed that supplementation with 540 mg of GLA per day could help patients reduce their usage of NSAIDs, as shown in the accompanying graph (page 1).⁵

Later research showed that higher dosages could achieve still greater results.

In 1993, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania conducted a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, 24-week trial with 37 Rheumatoid Arthritis patients. Patients in the

treatment group received 1.4 grams of GLA per day, and assessed their symptoms on a daily basis. Treatment with GLA reduced the number of tender joints by 36%, the tender joint score by 45%, the number of swollen joints by 28%, and the swollen joint score by 41%, whereas the placebo group did not show significant improvement in any measure. The researchers concluded that “GLA in doses used in this study is a well-tolerated and effective treatment for Rheumatoid Arthritis.”⁶

Three years later, researchers at the University of Massachusetts further explored the use of GLA in Rheumatoid Arthritis with a much longer study using twice as much GLA in the treatment. In this study, 56 patients participated in a year-long trial. Their results indicated

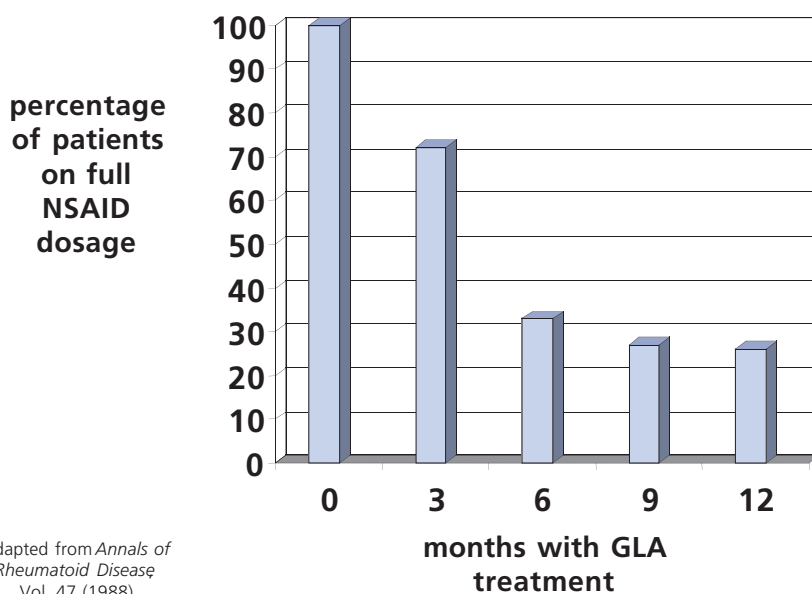
that 2.8 grams of GLA were more effective than the 1.4 grams used in previous research. Patients experienced significant improvements in their symptoms within the first six months, and continued to improve during the remaining six months. After 12 months of treatment, the number of tender joints reduced by 50%, the tender joint score reduced by 54%, the number of swollen joints reduced by 42%, and the swollen joint score reduced by 42%. Furthermore, morning stiffness decreased by 67% and overall pain assessment diminished by 27%.⁷ These results demonstrate the importance of long-term supplementation with large doses of GLA.

GLA and Juvenile Arthritis

Data from a recent study conducted at the Shriners Hospital for Children in Springfield, MA, found that Borage Oil can also benefit children with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis (JRA). Data from the study was presented by lead researcher Dr. Deborah Rothman, MD, PhD, November 15, 1999, during the Annual Meeting of the American College of Rheumatology in Boston.

Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis is the most frequent major connective tissue disease in children. The disease afflicts between 27,400 and 54,800 children under age 16 in the United States – some as young as 6 months old. JRA is often a mild condition which causes few problems, but

Reduction of NSAIDs with GLA Treatment



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in severe cases it can produce serious complications. Symptoms include morning stiffness, stiffness following inactivity, and night pain. Fatigue and low-grade fever are common at the onset of disease. Anorexia, weight loss, failure to grow, and psychologic regression are seen in many children.

Use of Borage Oil in JRA may allow some patients to reduce their dosage of standard medications such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) or corticosteroids.

Effects of GLA on other forms of arthritis

Although there have been no human trials to date studying the effects of GLA on other forms of arthritis, preliminary laboratory data is promising. Animal studies show that GLA supplementation can have positive effects on other types of inflammation.⁸

Getting the GLA you need:

The best source of GLA is Borage (or Starflower) Oil, which contains up to 23% GLA. Evening Primrose Oil (8-10% GLA) and Black Currant Oil (15-17% GLA) are other sources of GLA. Because of the higher con-

centration of GLA in Borage, a patient may consume fewer capsules overall to achieve the required dosage. This allows the patient to consume the least amount of supplemental calories possible and makes Borage Oil the most economical source of GLA.

Positive effects on Rheumatoid Arthritis can be seen with dosages in the range of 6 to 11 grams of Borage Oil per day.

The first positive effects of GLA on Rheumatoid Arthritis can generally be seen after one month of supplementation. The full effects of GLA supplementation are seen over longer periods.

Improvement may continue for up to one year after beginning treatment.

Studies have shown that Borage Oil is safe and non-toxic, even in large amounts.

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