

## Chicken Soup for Your Joints



### By Dr. Jean-Jacques Dugoua, ND

When we think of chicken soup and health, we think of sick days spent lying in bed with a cold or the flu, finding solace in a yummy bowl of warm soup. Little did we know that chicken soup may have benefits beyond being a source of comfort food during sickness; chicken cartilage may actually help with arthritis. Cartilage is a form of connective tissue which contains type II collagen, a structural protein in the body. Cartilage provides a flexible medium between two bones (e.g. a joint) so the two bones may move with respect to one another. In arthritis the cartilage within the joint may be inflamed and/or destroyed, leading to pain, limited movement, loss of joint function and sometimes, crippling consequences.

It is estimated that arthritis affects 43 million people in the United States and costs more than \$14 billion each year in medical care, disability payments, reduced productivity and lost wages. There are over 100 types of arthritis, but the two most common types are osteoarthritis (OA) and rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Currently, there is no known cure for arthritis. Most treatment options focus on minimizing symptoms and decreasing, or even stopping, the immune response and subsequent inflammatory process in the body. This is most often accomplished through pharmaceutical drugs, particularly nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).

In arthritis, the body creates immune complexes that attack the joint. Recent research, however, has provided evidence that the signal to attack joints in the body could possibly be retrained through the intake of chicken collagen type II. The theory behind the use of chicken cartilage revolves around retraining the immune system to no longer attack itself, thereby no longer attacking the cartilage in the joint.

Researchers believe that by ingesting cartilage orally, the immune tissue in the gut (gut-associated lymphoid tissue) will facilitate the body's tolerance to cartilage and thereby prevent an attack on its own joint cartilage. Laboratory studies have shown that the ingestion of chicken collagen deactivates certain white blood cells (killer T-cells) responsible for autoimmune disease.

A pilot study was conducted at the Department of Pharmacy Sciences at Creighton University Medical Center, Omaha, Nebraska on the oral intake of chicken collagen for the treatment of arthritis. Five female subjects (aged 58 to 78 years) suffering from significant joint pain received 10 mg of chicken collagen per day (glycosylated undenatured type II collagen) for 42 days. After 42 days, the women reported a significant reduction in pain, morning stiffness and stiffness after periods of rest, reduced pain that worsens with use of the affected joint and reported reduced loss of range of motion and function. The authors concluded that chicken collagen was an effective and novel therapy for treating symptoms of OA and RA.

Although the above-mentioned study is small and further research is needed to confirm its usefulness, there is promise that chicken collagen may be an effective treatment option for arthritic patients. Until we know for sure, don't throw away your chicken bones.