

TCM: Pain in the ...

Arthritis or inflammation of the joints is often regarded as an inevitable condition of old age. But it's a complex disorder and can affect people at any stage of life. Two of the most common types are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. The former is primarily caused by a gradual loss of cartilage due to wear and tear or injury, whereas rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disorder in which the body's immune system attacks its own tissues, particularly the joints.

These two types of arthritis are quite different, but both create constant joint pain. The most

results in joint pain, numbness, swelling and impaired movement. Symptoms are traditionally grouped into four patterns: wind, cold, damp and heat.

Wind arthritis is characterised by joint pain, which moves from joint to joint. Limited joint movement is often accompanied by fever as well as an aversion to wind. Primary herbs used to expel the pathogens include ledebouriella root, ephedra and mulberry twig.

Cold arthritis is characterised by severe joint or muscle pain with a fixed location. It's relieved by applying warmth, but increases with exposure to the cold. Joint movement is limited. Treatments include aconite ephedra and Chinese clematis.

Damp arthritis is characterised by pain, soreness and swelling in muscles and joints, and a feeling of heaviness and numbness in the limbs. The pain is fixed in location and is aggravated by damp weather.

Heat arthritis can develop from any of the above three types. It causes severe pain and hot, red and swollen joints. The pain is generally relieved by applying cold to the joints.

In addition, some herbs are used to treat specific joints. For example, notopterygium root Sichuan lovage and cassia twig can help the upper limbs. According to TCM, the kidney and liver are important for flexibility and healthy bones, and so appropriate herbs are applied accordingly.

The herbs can be used in different ways, such as decoctions, hot compresses, washing or steaming, or prescribed according to the advice of your health practitioner.

debilitating symptoms generally affect the hip, knee and wrist.

Anti-inflammatory drugs can promptly relieve symptoms. But their effectiveness often decreases with use and they usually have side effects. Traditional Chinese medicine has developed holistic methods that can help slow down the condition, minimise joint damage, prevent deformities and preserve joint mobility, as well as provide more comprehensive therapeutic effects.

TCM classifies arthritis as a bi-syndrome condition, namely a disease resulting from pathogens blocking extremities, meridians or organs. This

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Before taking any medicine, consult your TCM or medical practitioner