



Rheumatism

Rheumatism is a generic term that brings altogether a little more than 200 distinct diseases characterized either by non-inflammatory joint pain such as arthrosis, generally related to the wear and tear of the cartilages connecting the bones, or inflammatory joint pain such as arthritis, an autoimmune inflammatory disease.

Since my teenage years, I have experienced regular joint pains, first with my knees which, because of my hypermobile joints and lack of enthusiasm for sports, have difficulty keeping my kneecaps aligned with my knee bones axis, resulting in regular inflammation and swelling.

A few years later, I started suffering from hallux valgus, a foot deformation also linked to my toe joints hyperlaxity. The pain associated with that inflammation used to wake me up during the night before an operation could be performed on both my feet.

My rheumatism problems reactivated with my pregnancy – Ah, [hormones](#) sweet hormones... –: Starting the 3rd month, I began feeling sharp pains in my left thumb, pains which prevented me from lifting any object with my hand. This pain went on throughout my whole pregnancy. After giving birth, I also suffered from rotating neuralgia (nerve inflammation), first in my feet – I could barely put my feet on the ground when I got up at night because of the pain intensity – the pain then moved in both my hands for several months before attacking my trigeminal facial nerve. Luckily, when I talked about it to my gynecologist, he explained to me that it happened to a few women and that it was an autoimmune disease – our antibodies attack healthy parts of our body



mistaking them for a foreign body; following a pregnancy, the foreign substance is obviously the baby cells traces left, usually in [our blood](#) and [our body](#) sometimes has trouble sorting things out after the battle – and that it would not last more than 2 years. For me, it lasted a full year.

Rheumatism is often a family affair, as it is for me : my mother suffers from it, her father also did and my paternal grandmother as well. I've watched my mother, suffering from pain in her hands, elbows and knees joints, swallow anti-inflammatories and painkillers almost everyday after my brother's birth, from her early 40s up until today. For my part, my rheumatism really developed in my hands when pre-menopause first signs appeared; again, my hormones played a major role in rheumatism onset and recurrence. I started experiencing pain in my right knee to the point that I couldn't kneel anymore. Then, knuckles in my hands started to hurt and swell.

Unlike my mother, I had tools at my disposal and, in particular, phytotherapy (herb treatment) thanks to the Internet. The first year after the onset of symptoms, I was 46 at that time, I started taking Borage oil capsules and the pain in my knees was gone after a few weeks. I was relieved of pain for about a year before the inflammations in my fingers started. Then, in addition to Borage oil, I started, a daily intake of Harpagophytum (anti-inflammatory plant) associated with Meadowsweet (vegetable aspirin, not to be ingested when allergic to aspirin) which was very effective in terms of inflammation reducing but not completely stopping it though.

It's a drug prescribed by my dentist for my gums, also collateral damage of my hormones imbalance, an avocado and soybeans oils made of natural anti-inflammatory, also used for joint pains, which made them disappear completely, until the next hormone peak crisis. I keep on taking this 3 months medication regularly but I do not take it non-stop because soy is a phyto-hormone – this is probably what makes it so effective in this case – and its excessive absorption is known to increase risks of hormone-dependent cancers such as breast cancer. Regarding avocados, whether as oil or fruit, it is definitely our best friend on a daily basis: it contains antioxidants that help lower cholesterol rates thus preventing cardiovascular diseases, cancers and protecting eyes; its antioxidants are also indicated to reduce inflammation, especially the endometrium one during menstruation – back to hormones again! – ; there's a Mexican saying that goes something like this: "An avocado a day keeps you away from the doctor's office."

I've also tried Evening Primrose oil which, like soy, is a phyto-hormone and has lots of antioxidant and omega 3 benefits. Unfortunately, I am allergic to it. Indeed, all substances, whether natural or not, may not be tolerated by our body. It is therefore advisable to always be careful and attentive when we consume new substances.

However, those plants have allowed me so far not to take painkillers, to limit or stop inflammation over time and to keep on enjoying the use of my hands and knees without any discomfort for several more years.

Nature provides us with treatments that are often more effective – and less harmful – than those offered by pharmaceutical companies. Let's not forget that the chemical molecules used by those companies were, at the beginning of drugs industrial development, derived from



substances produced by plants, such as aspirin naturally present in Meadowsweet or White Willow or natural anti-inflammatory Harpagophytum.