

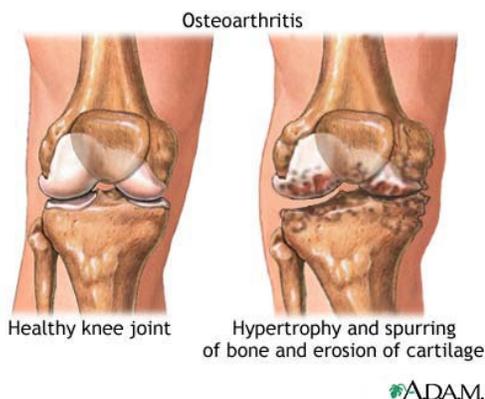
Relief from Knee Pain with Laser Therapy

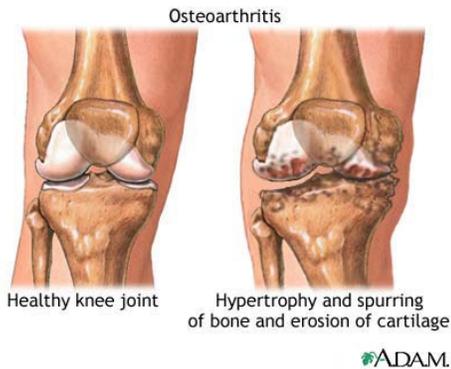
Dr. Deidre Macdonald, ND

One of the most common injuries that people experience as they get older is knee pain. You depend on your knees to stay active. Knee pain can significantly affect quality of life when it limits the enjoyment of your favorite activities, and especially if it interferes with your sleep. Years ago, in my naturopathic medical practice, I was struck by the lack of good options for helping people with knee pain and set out to find a treatment that would provide real and lasting pain reduction for my patients. I too had an old knee injury that was becoming arthritic. I was impressed by the research on laser therapy and have been delighted to find that it has helped me and many of my patients to enjoy life without knee pain. Laser therapy has helped patients with knee problems to enjoy reduced pain, increased mobility and a return to the activities they enjoy.

Low Intensity Laser Therapy (LILT) has been used successfully as a treatment for an extensive range of acute and chronic musculoskeletal conditions. This painless procedure speeds the healing of tissues, including cartilage, ligaments, muscles, bursa, nerves, tendons and skin. It enhances DNA synthesis, cell replication, cellular nutrition, circulation and has both anti-inflammatory and pain relieving effects. The effectiveness of treating knee pain with laser therapy has been well established in human and animal placebo-controlled, double-blind studies.

The majority of the knee pain is due to osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis is caused by the wear and tear on the knee joint and affects 80% of people by the age of 65. When cartilage begins to wear down in the knee joint, the bone begins to get exposed and irritated, sometimes causing bone spurs to form. This breakdown can lead to sharp medial knee pain. It is often worse first thing in the morning, after sitting or driving for a while, and going down stairs. Swelling may be present, especially in the inner side of the knee. Baker's cysts in the back of the knee may also contribute to pain and swelling. With recent studies showing little benefit from arthroscopic surgery for arthritic knees, and the side effects of pain medications making them an undesirable long term treatment option, patients are left with either pain and limitation or the long wait for knee replacement.





Laser therapy is an excellent treatment choice for arthritis that has been proven to work in many well designed studies. In animal studies, laser therapy has been shown to decelerate the arthritic process, regenerate worn cartilage, and increase the thickness of cartilage. In humans, a meta-analysis of 36 randomized placebo-controlled trials found that 2-4 weeks of laser therapy offered significant pain relief compared to placebo controls. Another more recent clinical trial measured a significant decrease in pain, reduction of knee swelling, increased range of motion and circulation compared to a placebo group that was treated with a sham laser.

In my naturopathic medical practice, I use a state of the art Low Level Laser Therapy machine called the Meditech Bioflex that utilizes 3" x 5" pads of light that can be wrapped around the knee. Meditech practitioners tracked 98 patients with knee problems, 63% of whom were diagnosed with osteoarthritis. On average, 11 treatments, each about 40 minutes long, were administered. Ninety-two percent of the patients reported significant improvement in knee pain.

Other knee conditions that can be successfully treated by low level laser therapy include chondromalacia patella (often seen in runners), meniscus tears (pain in the inner and outer knee), rheumatoid arthritis, bursitis, and ligament strains and tears (often acute sports injuries).

Over the counter and prescription anti-inflammatory medications, while providing good pain relief, come at a cost. Sustained use of ibuprofen (Advil) increases the risk of bleeding ulcers and other gastro-intestinal side effects. Patients looking for safer anti-inflammatories have several options. For those who are currently dependent on anti-inflammatory medications like ibuprofen, I will often write a prescription for a topical anti-inflammatory medicine called **Diclofenac**. Numerous studies have shown that prescription strength topical diclofenac provides similar pain reduction in osteoarthritis of the knee to oral NSAIDs like ibuprofen, without the risk of stomach bleeding. Alternatively, a natural topical cream called **Traumeel** was recently featured in the International Journal of Internal Medicine. Upon review of the placebo controlled studies of Traumeel, it was concluded that “Traumeel has shown comparable effectiveness to NSAIDs in terms of reducing symptoms of inflammation, accelerating recovery, and improving mobility, with a favourable safety profile”. Natural oral anti-inflammatories include **fish oil and turmeric**. Both of these natural medicines have many side benefits instead of side effects! One turmeric extract product called **Mireva** has shown to have superior absorption and effectiveness. In a large, 9 month placebo controlled study of Mireva’s effect on osteoarthritis of the knee, the Mireva group showed a significant decrease in pain and increase in range of motion versus the placebo group. So don’t let knee pain slow you down. With natural medicines and laser therapy, safe, painless and effective treatment is available.

To book a free 15 minute consultation with Courtenay naturopathic physician Dr. Deidre Macdonald to see if laser therapy is right for you, please call 250 897-0235 or visit www.getwellhere.com.