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Painful swelling in your joints? You may be suffering from arthritis. The first known cases were traced to 4500 BC, where it was the most common health condition. Researching that prehistoric age revealed another oddity: even dinosaurs were afflicted with primary ankle osteoarthritis.

With over 100 different types, it's no wonder that one in six of Canadians have been diagnosed. It's disturbing that 60% of sufferers are under the age of 65. The most common form is osteoarthritis – degenerative joint disease – mostly affecting adults over 45. Even more alarming is that a number of 15-year-olds boys have been diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis, which attacks spinal joints in predominately males.

Is it possible to send arthritis to the land of extinction with the dinosaur? Members of SIWC are ripe with tips on how to live more peacefully with this disease that strikes more than 4.4 Canadians.

Clinton Chevrier says super foods such as Xocai dark chocolate – an anti-oxidant-rich, unprocessed cold-pressed dark chocolate – can reverse aging and chronic conditions. Its success is because of oxidation, which occurs from stress, exercise and even breathing. It's like squeezing lemon juice onto a freshly cut apple to stop the fruit from turning brown.

Exercise is a proven cure for chronic health conditions. Tora Cameron, a master trainer and owner of Fittreck Nordic Walking, notes that walking poles can aid in lessening arthritic pain. Using this gentle, low-stress exercise with unique walking poles engages the legs and upper body in a total body workout. "The effects carry demonstrated physical and psychological benefits," says Cameron. Nordic poles take up to 30% of stress going into the knees, back, feet and hips, favourite nesting spots for arthritis. Cameron adds, "When used properly, they'll also relieve neck and shoulder pain, as well as improve shoulder mobility." The poles encourage gentle walking rather than jarring movements. Using the poles reduces the risk of falling by improving balance, posture and stability.

Jeannie Stevens from Sidney's Yoga Studio offers more sage advice in beating the arthritic blues. She recommends stretching, a cornerstone of yoga. Stretching stimulates muscles and nerves and provides a gentle, stress-free way to improve your health overall. In particular, she advocates breath awareness, such as meditation or other forms of mindful practice. "The benefits of a quiet mind create an environment of acceptance and fresh approach to well being," she notes. Her tip for starting the day off easy takes only a few minutes. Sit quietly, close your eyes and breath in deeply, saying "I calm my body." When you breathe out, say "I smile."

These SIWC members' suggestions show how we can change our perception of what is healthy by learning how our bodies respond to daily-living factors. With more than six million Canadians estimated to have arthritis by 2026, make preventative medicine part of your daily program to ward off arthritis or to keep the pain at bay.

June's column will be on headaches. Send your questions to brittafrombach@gmail.com.

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