Arthritis cure: Over the counter tablets could be just as effective as prescription drugs

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ARTHRITIS has many types, including osteoarthritis. However, the widely-prescribed drugs to currently treat it can have serious side-effects - but an over the counter alternative might be safer and just as effective.

[Osteoarthritis](http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/803679/arthritis-symptoms-exercise-diet-cure-osteoarthritis) is a form of arthritis affecting over eight million people in the UK, and it’s the most common form of joint disease.

It often affects the knee due to constant impact on the body’s largest joints over time.

The degenerative joint condition causes pain, loss of function and frequently a degree of disability.

Currently the drugs widely-prescribed to treat it by keeping pain under control are non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAIDs) - celecoxib - and paracetamol.

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These can include a greater risk of heart attack, stroke and stomach ulcers.

There is a need for effective and safer alternatives.

However, a new study published in the Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases has discovered that an over the counter tablet - chondroitin sulfate - is just as good.

It significantly reduced pain and improved function, they found.

While joint function improved more quickly in patients taking celecoxib, there were no overall differences in effectiveness.

Importantly, the researchers also found it to be far safer.

They are calling for it to be used for long term treatment, particularly in older people, among whom the condition is common.

The researchers wrote: “This compelling benefit-risk profile, in light of the known clinical risks associated with chronic usage of NSAIDS and paracetamol, underscores the potential importance of pharmaceutical-grade (chondroitin sulfate) in the management of knee (osteoarthritis), especially in the older population requiring long-term treatment.”

They suggest a daily dose of 800mg of pharmaceutical-grade chondroitin sulfate be used as first step for treating the condition.

According to Arthritis Research UK, [symptoms](http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/794768/arthritis-rheumatoid-osteoarthritis-joints-symptoms) of the condition include pain, stiffness, swelling and a grinding sensation.

Other treatment options include capsaicin cream, or in more serious cases surgery.