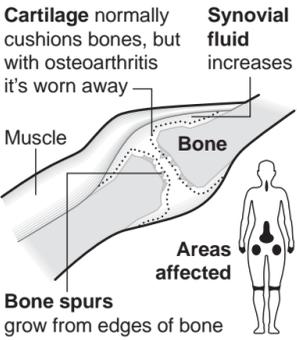


Study: Supplements might not ease arthritis pain

How osteoarthritis attacks the joints

More than 20 million Americans suffer from osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis, a degenerative joint disease.



SOURCE: National Institutes of Health AP

Unregulated substances help some patients

By ALICIA CHANG
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Two hot-selling supplements used by millions of Americans are of little help to most people with mild arthritis, concludes a large government study that is part of an effort to scrutinize unregulated health remedies.

For most arthritis patients with aching knees, the health food store supplements, glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate, turned out to be no better than dummy pills. People who had more acute knee pain seemed to show some benefit.

Because of that hint of possible relief and other factors, the study may not settle the debate

"I want to stay active. The supplements work for me so why not continue with them?"

Irene Schwartzburt
72-year-old who uses the unregulated supplements to relieve pain in her knee

about these unproven treatments even though it's considered the largest and most scientific test to date.

"We still have a bit of a conundrum," said Dr. Tim McAlindon, a Tufts University rheumatologist who had no role in the research.

Rheumatologist Dr. Daniel Clegg of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, who led the study, suggested people with severe arthritis talk to their doctors about trying the supplements short-term to see if they work.

More than 20 million Americans suffer from osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis. That number is expected to

double in the next two decades as baby boomers age. Osteoarthritis is a degenerative joint disease that affects the knees, hips, back and the small joints in the fingers.

The search for pain relief helped boost worldwide sales of glucosamine and chondroitin to \$1.7 billion last year, according to the Nutrition Business Journal, which tracks supplements.

The supplements, made from animal cartilage and shellfish, have had even wider appeal amid safety concerns over certain painkillers, including the arthritis medicine Vioxx, which was yanked from the market in 2004.

At least 5 million Americans use the two supplements either

alone or together, government figures show.

President Bush was among the customers for a while because of knee pain, but spokeswoman Dana Perino said Wednesday the president no longer takes the supplements. Bush has replaced running with mountain biking.

The supplements showed no known side effects during the government's six-month study, but the scientists didn't address the safety of longer-term use.

The arthritis research, published in today's New England Journal of Medicine, is the third major study in a year to find no overall benefit from some of the most popular nutritional supplements.

Recently, research showed the herb saw palmetto didn't reduce symptoms of an enlarged prostate, and last year a study indicated echinacea didn't prevent or treat colds.

Unlike drugs, such supplements are not regulated by the U.S.

Food and Drug Administration and their makers don't have to prove the products are safe or effective.

The Arthritis Foundation said Wednesday it was recommending people with severe knee pain speak to their doctors about whether combined glucosamine-chondroitin therapy might be a good addition to their overall treatment.

Generally, arthritis sufferers are urged to exercise, keep their weight down and try hot and cold therapy, along with painkillers if needed.

One person who plans to keep using the supplements is 72-year-old Irene Schwartzburt. She said the unregulated remedies relieved the "sticking pain" in her right knee when painkillers failed.

"I want to stay active," said the retired teacher from Plainview, N.Y. "The supplements work for me so why not continue with them?"

Senate committee advances bill allowing in-state wine shipments

By DEANNA MARTIN
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Indianapolis Wineries would be able to ship wine to customers in Indiana, with certain restrictions, under a bill a Senate committee passed Wednesday.

Senators changed the bill dramatically from a previous version of the bill, which did not allow direct wine shipments to Indiana customers.

The amended bill would create a direct wine seller's permit so that both Indiana wineries and those in other states could ship to Indiana residents. Wineries that qualify for the permit would have to pay \$100 each year, and could only ship 1,000 cases of wine to Indiana customers each year.

Customers ordering wine would first have to visit the winery in person and complete a face-to-face transaction, during which the winery would check the ID of a person and verify their address and other details.

The customer could then order up to two cases per month of wine to have shipped to them at home. Customers already on the winery's shipping list would not have

"I don't want to be prohibited from buying (wine) while I'm there or having it shipped to me after I visited there."

Deby Abel
Indianapolis resident

to make another visit to the winery, lawmakers said.

The legislation is a reaction to a U.S. Supreme Court decision that overturned wine shipping laws in two other states, and prompted Indiana officials to issue a letter to in-state wineries saying they could no longer ship directly to Indiana customers.

The wineries sued the Indiana Alcohol & Tobacco Commission, saying the change was made without public comment and without alerting either the governor or the state attorney general.

A judge ruled the agency's order was not valid and granted wineries a preliminary injunction allowing them to ship wine in-state through Wednesday.

Wineries hope the General Assembly will pass a bill allowing them to ship to Indiana

residents by that time.

Before the alcohol commission sent the letter, wineries made in-state direct shipments even though it was not expressly permitted in the law.

Deby Abel, of Indianapolis, said she had ordered wine from wineries she's visited because she is sometimes too busy to return there to make a purchase.

"I don't want to be prohibited from buying (wine) while I'm there or having it shipped to me after I visited there," she said.

Some worried that direct shipments could increase underage drinking, but others said teenagers are more likely to abuse cheaper beer or liquor, not specialty wines.

The bill would also create a wholesale winery permit, so that wineries could essentially continue the practice of selling directly to retailers such as restaurants or local stores.

The bill could be changed further as it moves through the General Assembly.

The Senate Commerce and Transportation Committee passed the bill unanimously, and it moves to the full Senate for consideration.

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