

**EFFECTIVE FOOD
SUPPLEMENT FOR OA**

Long-term, high-dose NSAID treatment for the symptomatic management of osteoarthritis (OA) in elderly patients is associated with an increased risk of serious adverse events, such as gastrointestinal bleeding and renal failure. Studies have suggested that various food supplements might improve OA symptoms, and subsequently reduce NSAID consumption in elderly OA patients; however, the methodological validity of some of these studies has been questioned. Researchers in France have performed a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial to test the effects of Phytalgic® (Phythea Laboratories, Savigny-le-Temple, France)—a food supplement containing fish oils, *Urtica dioica*, zinc and vitamin E—on OA symptoms and consumption of NSAIDs and analgesics.

The study included 81 patients, aged 40–80 years (mean 57 years), who had chronic OA of the knee or hip and were regular NSAID users. Patients received either Phytalgic® ($n=41$) or placebo ($n=40$) three times per day for 12 weeks, and were told to continue their normal, as-needed use of analgesics and/or NSAIDs. Mean WOMAC (Western Ontario–McMaster University osteoarthritis index) scores and consumption of analgesics and NSAIDs did not differ between groups at baseline.

At the end of the study, the mean consumption of analgesics and NSAIDs had decreased by over 50% in the treatment group, and was considerably lower than that of the placebo group. Furthermore, mean WOMAC scores for pain, stiffness and function were all significantly lower in the treatment group after 12 weeks.

The authors conclude that, although promising, these findings require confirmation in longer-term, larger clinical studies.

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Original article Jacquet, A. et al. Phytalgic®, a food supplement, vs placebo in patients with osteoarthritis of the knee or hip: a randomised double-blind placebo-controlled clinical trial. *Arthritis Res. Ther.* **11**, R192 (2009)