

Chronic Pain Management Using MSM **Methyl Sulfonyl Methane (MSM)** **by P. Anthony Chapdelaine, Jr., MD, MSPH**

MSM (Methyl Sulfonyl Methane): a natural chemical supplement for pain. Obtained through most health food stores.

For Chronic Pain:
Instructions in dosing:

Start by taking 2 grams (four 500-mg capsules if obtained from bulkmsm.com) of MSM with each meal (three times a day, which is a total of six grams for that day). You do not have to take it with meals, it's just easier to remember to take it when you take it with meals. If you do not get diarrhea or loose stools after a day or so, then increase the dose to three grams (six 500-mg. capsules) three times a day with each meal. Keep increasing the number of capsules every couple days until you get loose stools (diarrhea) then decrease back to the last dose (before the diarrhea) and stay on that many capsules each day. You may prefer to use the crystals, which can be added to water or juice or other beverage and thus avoid taking capsules, especially if your condition requires over ten grams of MSM each day.

The only side effect for this supplement is diarrhea when you take too much. (It's very good for constipation, since one of its three mechanisms of action is to increase the motility, or speed, at which the intestines move food along.) Also, some people may have trouble sleeping if taken in the evening.

For most people, it takes one week to three weeks before noticeable pain relief occurs. MSM works by relieving pain through the "c" pain nerve fibers, which carry long-term (or chronic) pain signals, unlike narcotics and NSAIDS (such as Advil, Celebrex, Vioxx, etc.) which mostly work on "acute" pain nerve fibers.

The third mechanism of action of MSM is to help decrease "inflammation," just like NSAIDS, but without the long-term side effects of all NSAIDS. (The NSAIDS, while relieving pain, destroy or stop the cartilage from growing.)

Stay on MSM as long as you want. Once you stop it, just realize that it will take some time to build up in the body again if you decide to restart it.

The following lists many of the conditions, and the approximate dose in grams per day (g/d) to manage the pain (or treat the condition). If you have osteo-arthritis pain, you will want to add some additional supplements that work very well in managing that pain (and helping rebuild the cartilage that is damaged or missing). Go to our article:

MSM

(Much of this information is taken from the book: *The Miracle of MSM - The Natural Solution for Pain*, Stanley W. Jacob, M.D., Ronald M. Lawrence, M.D., Ph.D., and Martin Zucker, Berkley Books, New York, 1999. Page numbers are referenced by parentheses.)

Precaution: if on ASA, dicumerol, heparin, MSM may increase blood thinning effect (46).

Severe pain: Use at least 10 g/d (grams per day)

MSM has three primary mechanisms of action:

- Anti-inflammatory (85)
- Analgesic (c-fibers)
- Increases blood supply

Its main functions are:

Softens scar tissue

Osteoarthritis/degenerative arthritis (with glucosamine sulfate on empty stomach)

Cracked bleeding skin of feet/toes: MSM gel

Carpal tunnel/RSI: 15 g/d

Juvenile RA, Rheumatoid arthritis, Heberden's nodes (nodes may take months to a year: 1 part MSM crystals in 6 parts water; soak in lukewarm solution for at least 30 minutes)

Fibromyalgia, rosacea: 15g/bid (116). Fibromyalgia: sleep on magnetic mattress pad to get some relief (Vibrational Medicine, pg. 310)

Herniated discs, back pain: chiropractic, acupuncture, ultrasound, hot baths, massage, tylenol, MSM

Muscle soreness, weight training, use MSM at least 10 g/d

Tendinitis, bursitis: 6-8 g/d and 15% MSM gel several times a day

Interstitial cystitis (bladder instillation works; oral: 20-40 g/d) (206)

Scleroderma: takes months to soften: oral and gel

Athletic strains/sprains

Shingles

Cold sores/sore throat (gargle)

TMJ (oral and topical: may take time)

Bell's Palsy

Buerger's disease

Inflammatory Bowel disease

Headaches (chronic, related to muscle spasm): orally and MSM gel every hour or two to back of head where tension

GERD (gastroesophageal reflux disease): Zantac/Prilosec, diet (small meals x 6), MSM helps reduce or eliminate drugs

Dental pain: orally and rub crystals on gum (paste)

Gingivitis (mouthwash: swish 2 or 3 times daily) and orally 2-8 g/d

Teeth whitener: crystals on toothbrush, brush once or twice a day

Lichen planus: MSM mouthwash (takes months to work)

Acute pain: days to weeks before working

Chronic pain: weeks to months before working

2 to 8 g/ d is normal: start low and build up doses (See Instructions in dosing above.)

Formulations (you can buy or make your own): capsules, crystals, topical gel, lotion, cream

Energy (223)

Allergies (pollen): psychological/behavioral problems, headaches, muscle aches, menstrual problems, urinary problems, depression, exhaustion, suicidal: secondary to inflammation and immune weakness): 2 g/d to start, increase to 2 g bid as needed (up to 8 g/d) then decrease for maintenance (164)

Asthma: 2-4 g/d, increase to 10 g or more as needed; inflammatory process; child can start on 2 g/d and be brought to 4 g/d (occasionally more) over a month (crystals in juice or other beverage) often can be weaned off cortisone; adults usually need more MSM than children; childhood asthma may be helped with acupuncture (adults too): lots of fluids - 8 ounces every hour awake, air filtered at home, avoiding allergens), remove pets from living quarters, exterminate cockroaches, no tobacco smoke (180)

Skin/hair. Nails: cystine (needs sulfur): rub in lotion and orally (24)

Sinusitis: relief within 2 weeks usually; MSM 15% solution (teaspoon crystals/ounce water):

Spray bottle 3 to 4 times per nostril several times a day (slight burning sensation that you'll get accustomed to after a couple days)

Food allergies (ADHD: up to 2/3 are unrecognized food allergies); MSM may stabilize mast cells; tomato sauces, citric, certain vegetables: use MSM beforehand

Lupus: may take large doses, 40-50 g/d) (203)

Constipation: fiber, water, exercise, 100 mg to 5 g/d

Scars/keloids: scars: before surgery and post-surgery, orally then topically; just after childbirth. For stretch marks (reduction in 2 months); keloids may take months to years, reduces pain, decreases size (219)

(If you use DMSO with the MSM, the major side-effects of DMSO are: bad breath and skin odor (like garlic); potential side-effects (infrequent): occasional nausea, headache, dizziness or localized skin rash)