

# Exercise may be the best relief for achy knees

By Patti Neighmond, NPR

If you're among the estimated 27 million Americans who suffer from osteoarthritis of the knee or hip, then perhaps you've tried the nutritional supplements glucosamine and chondroitin. They've been marketed for joint health for about 20 years, and sales are still brisk. But do they help?

Some horses might say yes. The supplements were first tried in horses, and there's some evidence that the supplements might improve joint function for them.

Glucosamine and chondroitin are also marketed to dog owners. But what about us humans? Unfortunately, researchers say that for us the results just don't match the glowing testimonials.

It would seem to make sense that glucosamine and chondroitin could help. They're both natural substances found in cartilage, that hard connective tissue that pads joints.

Glucosamine is an amino sugar that may help renew cartilage, and chondroitin sulfate is a complex carbohydrate that is thought to help cartilage retain water. Arthritis causes pain, swelling and stiffness in joints and damages cartilage over time. So the thought was maybe extra glucosamine and chondroitin could help maintain and even repair the damage.

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