



# The Chemo Connection

The heavy-duty drugs aren't just for cancer.

**LAST FALL, ACTRESS** and singer Selena Gomez made a surprising announcement: Not only had she been battling lupus, a chronic autoimmune condition that can cause muscle and joint pain, but she also had undergone chemotherapy to treat it.

Recently, the drugs most of us associate exclusively with fighting cancer have been making waves outside oncology, helping patients with often-debilitating diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and multiple

sclerosis. "It's been a well-kept secret that we're borrowing drugs from our oncologist friends," says rheumatologist Susan Manzi, MD, a member of the Lupus Foundation of America's Medical-Scientific Advisory Council. "In fact, a chemotherapy drug that has been used to fight breast cancer is one of the most common drugs worldwide for the management of rheumatoid arthritis."

Here's why it works: One side effect of chemotherapy is a suppressed immune

system, and that suppression is the exact response doctors are aiming for when treating certain autoimmune conditions. Drugs are administered via a pill or an IV, and their goal is the same as in cancer cases: to control the abnormal behavior of cells. One big difference lies in the dosage; people with autoimmune diseases typically get a lower dose than cancer patients, which may mean fewer side effects.

—BRITTANY BURKE



## WHERE DOES IT HURT?

*The Best Thing to Do for...*

## Neck Pain

➔ Neck pain is often due to muscle strain, and it's seen among people who spend long hours hunched over a computer or a phone. Sound familiar? Try these remedies:

**LOOK UP!** Physical therapists are treating more and more patients complaining of "text neck," and for

good reason: When you keep your neck and upper back in an awkward position for a prolonged period to text, you can cause muscle strain and spasms, says Mary Ann Wilmarth, a physical therapist in Boston.

**PUT A PIN IN IT.** People who underwent an average of ten 50-minute acupuncture sessions, along with traditional treatments such as physical therapy and pain meds, reported almost one-third less neck pain after a year, according to a 2015 study in the *Annals*

of *Internal Medicine*. (Those who stuck to PT and meds alone experienced a 23 percent reduction in discomfort.)

## GET YOUR VISION CHECKED.

Many women and men eventually develop presbyopia (blurred near vision), usually in their mid-40s; untreated, it can cause neck pain because you're straining to see. If you find you're holding books or newspapers at arm's length, visit your eye doctor. Once you get reading glasses, the problem should go away quickly. —H.L.