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How a healthy diet can help manage pain

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GOOD nutrition is an important part of your overall health.



A healthy diet should include a variety of foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, lean proteins and healthy fats.

This gives your body the nutrients and energy it needs to function properly.

A well-balanced diet also is vital for building your body's immune system and healing power. That's why nutrition can be your ally in fighting pain and inflammation.

Pro-inflammatory foods are foods that can contribute to inflammation. Most processed foods are pro-inflammatory, as they tend to be high in unhealthy fats, added sugars, preservatives and refined carbohydrates.

Deep-fried foods, pastries, processed cereals, white rice, white potatoes, sugar, bread and red meat are also pro-inflammatory foods.

Foods that can help reduce inflammation are fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains. The nutrients in some foods have anti-inflammatory or analgesic properties that can help relieve pain.

Anti-inflammatory foods may include:

– Fish and other foods that contain omega-3 fats

Omega-3 fats play a role in altering the inflammatory process and regulation of pain. Salmon, tuna, trout, mackerel and herring are high in these fats. Soy-based foods, walnuts, pecans and ground flaxseed are also good sources of omega-3 fats.

– Antioxidant-rich foods Colourful fruits and vegetables, such as leafy greens, avocados, beets and berries, are rich in antioxidants. Antioxidants can prevent, delay or repair some types of cell and tissue damage.

Antioxidants include certain vitamins, minerals and plant chemicals, such as vitamin C, vitamin E, carotene, lycopene and flavonoids.

A wide variety of other foods are also rich in antioxidants, such as lentils and beans; nuts and seeds; whole grains; green tea; and certain spices, such as ginger and turmeric.

– Certain dietary supplements Dietary supplements that have been shown to help provide a healthy balance of inflammatory chemicals in your body include the devil's claw, ginger root and turmeric. Other non-herbal dietary supplements, including omega-3 fish oil and antioxidants, are helpful when you don't get enough of these nutrients in your diet.

Always talk to your healthcare provider before starting any supplement regimen because some dietary supplements can interact with prescription medications. — Mayo Clinic News Network/ Tribune News Service