

Arthritis Diet

SOME FOODS FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET CAN HELP FIGHT INFLAMMATION CAUSED BY ARTHRITIS

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One of the most common questions people with arthritis ask is, “Is there a special arthritis diet?” While there’s no miracle diet for arthritis, many foods can help fight inflammation and improve joint pain and other symptoms.



For starters, a diet rich in whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts and beans, but low processed foods and saturated fat, is not only great for overall health, but can also help manage disease activity. If this advice sounds familiar, it’s because these are the principles of the Mediterranean diet, which is frequently touted for its anti-inflammatory and disease-fighting powers.

Mediterranean diet

Studies confirm that eating foods commonly part of the Mediterranean diet have the following benefits:

Lower blood pressure

Protect against chronic conditions, ranging from cancer to stroke

Help arthritis by curbing inflammation

Benefit your joints as well as your heart

Lead to weight loss, which can lessen joint pain

Here are key foods from the Mediterranean diet and why they’re so good for joint health. Find more information to manage pain with our pain resources.

Fish

Health authorities like the American Heart Association and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommend three to four ounces of fish, twice a week. Arthritis experts claim more is better.

Some types of fish are good sources of inflammation-fighting omega-3 fatty acids. One study found those who had the highest consumption of omega-3s had lower levels of two inflammatory proteins: C-reactive protein (CRP) and interleukin-6.

More recently, researchers have shown that taking fish oil supplements helps reduce joint swelling and pain, duration of morning stiffness and disease activity among people who have rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

Best sources: Salmon, tuna, sardines, herring, anchovies, scallops and other cold-water fish. Hate fish? Take a supplement. Studies show that taking 600 to 1,000mg of fish oil daily eases joint stiffness, tenderness, pain and swelling.

Nuts and Seeds

Eat 45g of nuts daily (one ounce is about a handful). “Multiple studies confirm the role of nuts in an anti-inflammatory diet,” explains José M. Ordovás, PHD, director of nutrition and genomics at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition

Research

Center on

Aging at Tufts

University in Boston.

One study found that over a 15-year period, men and women who consumed the most nuts had a 51% lower risk of dying from an inflammatory disease (like RA) compared with those who ate the fewest nuts. Another study found that subjects with lower levels of vitamin B6 — found in most nuts — had higher levels of inflammatory markers.

Nuts are jam-packed with inflammation-fighting monounsaturated fat. And though they're relatively high in fat and calories, studies show noshing on nuts promotes weight loss because their protein, fibre and monounsaturated fats are satiating.

Best sources: Walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios and almonds.

Fruits and vegetables

Aim for nine or more servings daily (one serving equals one cup of most veggies or fruit or two cups of raw leafy greens).

Fruits and vegetables are loaded with antioxidants. These potent chemicals act as the body's natural defence system, helping to neutralise unstable molecules called free radicals that can damage cells.

Research has shown that anthocyanins found in cherries and other red and purple fruits like strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries have an anti-inflammatory effect.

Citrus fruits — like oranges, grapefruits and limes — are rich in vitamin C. Research shows getting the right amount of that vitamin aids in preventing inflammatory arthritis and maintaining healthy joints. Other research suggests eating vitamin K-rich veggies like broccoli, spinach, lettuce, kale and cabbage dramatically reduces inflammatory markers in the blood.

Best sources: Colourful fruits and veggies — the darker or more brilliant the colour, the more antioxidants it has. Good ones include blueberries, cherries, spinach, kale and broccoli.

(Courtesy: arthritis.org)