

How Food Affects Arthritis

When you have arthritis, your body is in a state of increased inflammation. What you eat can increase inflammation and also set you up for other chronic conditions such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

Certain foods stimulate an inflammatory response whereas others may suppress an inflammatory response. Choosing the right foods can actually help to ease arthritis symptoms and improve overall joint health.



Being overweight also increases the load and strain on your joints, increasing the risk of joint damage or exacerbating joint pain. Therefore, your diet should also include healthy options that may promote weight control, which is incredibly important particularly for your hips and knees, which support most, if not all, of your body weight. So, what should you avoid eating and what good food choices can you make instead?

10 FOODS to AVOID if You Have Arthritis

1 Gluten and Wheat. Gluten and wheat both produce an inflammatory response. This is particularly relevant if you are intolerant to either. A 'leaky gut' (also known as 'increased gut permeability') allows toxins and by-products to enter the bloodstream via the intestines. This initiates an immune response, which leads to inflammation. Studies have linked a leaky gut to increased joint pain.

2 Dairy. Many dairy products contain a protein called casein. It has been shown that casein may irritate the tissue around the joints, which results in inflammation within the surrounding area.

3 Corn Oil. Corn oil or, to be more precise, any food with high doses of omega-6 fatty acids (don't get confused, that is different to omega-3) can produce inflammation. These foods commonly include baked goods or baked snacks. It is quite easy to overindulge in this fatty acid because many foods contain it. Corn oil isn't the only industrial oil to refrain from consuming. All oils derived from seeds – cottonseed, canola, grapeseed, soybean, safflower, rice bran, and sunflower oil, should also be avoided.

4 Fried and Processed Foods. Reducing the consumption of fried and processed foods can reduce inflammation and help restore the body's natural defences. Fried and processed foods are also discouraged when aiming to maintain a healthy weight.

5 Salt and Preservatives. Many foods produced today include excessive amounts of salt and preservatives; the former makes some foods more palatable, and the latter artificially extends a product's shelf-life. Prepared foods, including frozen and microwavable varieties, are often loaded with salt, preservatives and additives. All these ingredients can increase joint inflammation and contribute to irritation and pain.

6 'AGEs'. There's no relation to the number of years you've lived, despite the name. AGE is an acronym for 'advanced glycation end-product', which are proteins or lipids that become glycated as a result of exposure to sugars. This can happen in the cooking process (creating dietary AGEs), or form in the body as a result of too much sugar in the diet. AGEs can damage certain proteins in the body, which in turn triggers cytokines (inflammatory messengers of the autoimmune system). Cytokines directed to areas within or around joints exacerbate arthritis symptoms by increasing inflammation.

7 Certain Vegetables. Imagine seeing veggies on an a list of foods to avoid! Definitely not all veggies, just a small group called Solanaceae. These vegetables contain a compound that produces an adverse physiological response in arthritis patients. This means that consuming eggplant, peppers,

potatoes and tomatoes can worsen arthritis pain. Sweet potatoes, however, do not fall into this same group – so if you enjoy them, that's great news.

8 Sugar. Processed sugars (similar to AGEs) release cytokines that stimulate inflammation. I know it's hard – but those sugary treats or regular spoonfuls in your tea or coffee need to stop. Sugar is an 'umbrella term' for other types of derivative ingredients. So avoid ingredients that end in 'ose', such as fructose, glucose, and sucrose, among others. Just make sure you're reading the label! Natural sugar like honey may be a wiser choice.

9 Refined Carbohydrates. Refined carbohydrates, mainly white-flour products, white potatoes, white rice, and most cereals have a high-glycemic index (HGI). HGI foods trigger the production of by-products (including AGEs), which may worsen inflammation. In addition, refined carbs may increase the risk of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease more than fat does. As mentioned, obesity is among the primary risk factors for arthritis.

10 Alcohol and Tobacco. The use of alcohol and tobacco impacts the development of certain arthritis types. Alcohol contains large amounts of sugar and should be avoided or restricted as discussed above. A link exists between levels of alcohol use and the chances of developing gout.



11 FOODS to help EASE Your Arthritis

So, what are the BEST food types you can choose to reduce inflammation, promote healthy joints and monitor your body weight?



1 Omega-3-Rich Fish
This includes fish like herring, mackerel, salmon and tuna. Omega-3 fatty acids reduce inflammation in your body and can ease the side effects of arthritis. Eat an 85–170g (3–6-ounce) serving of one of these fatty fish (preferably grilled or steamed) two to four times a week for the best anti-inflammatory effect for your body.

2 Nuts
Almonds, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios and walnuts contain high amounts of fibre, calcium, magnesium, zinc, vitamin E and omega-3 fats which all have anti-inflammatory effects. Nuts are also heart-healthy, which is particularly important for people with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) since they have twice the risk of heart disease as healthy adults.

3 Soybeans: Tofu, and Edamame
Soy products can be effective at lowering inflammation in conditions like arthritis, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes. Some individuals with RA change to a plant-based diet, to help fight symptoms of pain and discomfort caused by this disease.

4 Berries
Many berries, including blueberries, blackberries, strawberries and raspberries contain vitamin C and polyphenols. They are rich in antioxidants and can help slow down the progression of chronic inflammatory diseases like arthritis.

5 Dark Leafy Greens
Spinach, kale, broccoli and collard greens (or the similar spring greens) are great sources of vitamins E and C. Vitamin E works to protect the body against pro-inflammatory molecules. Vitamin C helps the body make collagen, which is a major component of cartilage that aids in joint flexibility.

6 Green Tea
Green tea is a natural antioxidant with anti-inflammatory properties. It's important to drink green tea moderately if you are not accustomed to it.

7 Citrus Fruits: Grapefruits, Limes and Oranges
Rich in vitamin C and other anti-inflammatory antioxidants, citrus fruits may help people who have RA.

8 Whole Grains, Brown Rice, Oatmeal
Whole grains retain more minerals and vitamins than any processed or refined grains. Eat whole-wheat pasta, bread, and other whole grains such as brown rice and bulghur wheat will offer you inflammation-fighting benefits.

9 Red Kidney Beans and Pinto Beans
Beans are an excellent source of phytonutrients and fibre, which can reduce inflammation. Try to include beans in your meals at least twice a week for the most benefit.

10 Garlic and Onions
Garlic and onions act as anti-inflammatory agents for your joints and muscles and may reduce the risk of cartilage damage caused by arthritis. They also boost your immune system!

11 Olive Oil
Extra virgin olive oil is loaded with heart-healthy fats and oleocanthal, which has properties similar to non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs. Olive oil, combined with vitamin D, has also been shown to protect against bone loss.



It's possible to eat your way to better health.

These foods may reduce your arthritis symptoms and discomfort, as well as prevent further damage caused by arthritis.

Remember to try to avoid foods high in saturated and trans fats – such as red meat, fried food and packaged baked goods, as these can lead to weight gain, which may also exacerbate your symptoms.

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