

## The Nutritional Side of Inflammation

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Diet and nutrition are now recognized as being fundamental to the prevention and treatment of arthritis. There are three nutritional elements to managing arthritis and inflammatory conditions naturally - healing the digestive tract, reducing our bodies pro-inflammatory reactions, and alkalinizing our system.

A properly functioning gastrointestinal tract is the cornerstone to optimum health. Eliminating food allergies or food sensitivities is the first step. Food allergies elicit an immune response which activates our body's inflammatory processes. This immune response is especially harmful to those suffering from Rheumatoid Arthritis as it results in further damage to an already fragile immune system, and may increase the intestinal tract's vulnerability to harmful bacteria. Eliminate possible food allergies from your diet for six weeks to see if there is improvement and watch for a reemergence of symptoms as you reintroduce foods. Solanine from the nightshade plants (potatoes, peppers, eggplant, tomatoes) can trigger allergic responses and pain in arthritis sufferers. Eat foods that are high in proteolytic enzymes like pineapple and papaya to help break down your food properly. Eating foods high in fiber helps to keep the gastrointestinal tract free of harmful bacteria. Replenish your body's beneficial bacteria stores by eating natural unsweetened yogurt daily.

Nutrients supply the most basic building blocks of the body's powerful inflammatory compounds. Much of the problem with inflammatory disorders actually stems from an imbalance in dietary intake of the omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids and the consequential cascade in pro-inflammatory activity. It's estimated that North Americans are now eating 20 times more omega-6s than omega-3s. From a biochemical standpoint, this sets the stage for powerful and chronic pro-inflammatory reactions. In addition to a diet containing too many omega-6 fatty acids, a shortage of nutritional antioxidants, such as vitamin E, also contributes to chronic inflammation. Excess omega-6 fatty acids, lack of omega-3 fatty acids, and inadequate intake of antioxidants, allows the body's pro-inflammatory reaction to get out of control, leading to chronic inflammation and pain. The simplest physiological way of turning down the body's pro-inflammatory hormones is by restoring a balance between pro- and anti-inflammatory foods. This means switching from vegetable oils to extra-virgin olive oil, and avoiding processed foods because their makers frequently add omega-6 fatty acids. Fatty meats, eggs, margarine, shortening and dairy products should be dramatically cut down or eliminated, as well as caffeine, alcohol, and sugars. Increasing cold water fish like mackerel, sardines, herring and salmon can significantly reduce inflammation, and essential fatty acids from flaxseeds reduce inflammation and promote tissue healing. By eating simple unprocessed foods such as baked chicken, a salad, and steamed vegetables, it becomes easier to consume a more balanced ratio of omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids.

Too much acid in the body causes inflammation, which leads to pain. Animal products generally worsen inflammation in the joints. Avoid acid-forming foods like red meat, eggs, saturated fats, oils, fried foods, sugar, dairy products, refined carbohydrates, foods high in gluten (such as breads, pasta and pastries), alcohol and caffeine. The list may seem long but eliminating these foods can offer great relief. To help alkalize the system it is important to eat a diet rich in fresh vegetables, fruits, nuts, and whole grains. A high fiber diet helps sweep away acid build-up in the intestinal tract. Drinking filtered water with apple cider vinegar and honey before meals, and daily doses of fresh vegetable juice, can help alkalize your body's pH balance.

Following the anti-inflammatory dietary guidelines is the key to managing inflammatory conditions like arthritis. Your diet can be the key to helping achieve the pain relief and mobility that arthritis sufferers are looking for.