

Common questions about diet and arthritis

- Does glucosamine help arthritis? There is no convincing evidence for glucosamine (with/without chondroitin) for humans.
- Do nightshade vegetables (e.g. eggplant, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes) promote inflammation? There is limited evidence to support this.
- What diet is best? There is no one specific diet that is recommended. Different people react differently to different foods. The best link between arthritis and diet is maintaining a healthy weight. There is increased evidence of benefits of the Mediterranean diet.

Evidence statements:

- There is evidence to suggest vitamin C decreases the risk of progression in Osteoarthritis (OA) knee
- Vitamin D: Promotes bone health and is an immune modulator. However, to date there is insufficient evidence demonstrating a benefit to arthritis and it is not recommended for symptom treatment (ACR 2019). Natural source is from the sun.
- Vitamin E may decrease OA pain
- Antioxidants may minimize inflammation (e.g. brightly coloured fruits and vegetables such as blueberries, kale, oranges)
- Omega 3's (e.g. walnuts, flax / chia seeds, oily fish) regulate inflammatory responses & can slow down cartilage destruction
- Turmeric/curcumin have been shown to have anti-inflammatory properties

***Caution:** Supplements can have negative side effects when the dose is too high! Always consult your doctor and pharmacist prior to taking supplements. The best approach is to get these nutrients from your food, if possible.

Fun facts:

- Waist circumference and body fat have been determined to be more important than BMI as a measure of health risk.
- The combination of healthy eating and exercise is more effective than either one alone for weight management.
- If you need to lose weight, it should be gradual and sustained (1 - 2 pounds per week or 10% of your body weight per year)
- Cutting back 100 calories/day can help you lose 10 lbs. over a 1-year period (e.g. ~ 100 calories are 1 cream in your coffee, 12 potato chips, 1 small baked potato)
- Chew slowly to encourage healthy, mindful eating. It takes your brain 20 minutes to register that you are full.
- Your rate of metabolism is higher in the morning. Eat "breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a pauper"
- Muscle burns more calories than fat. Strength training can be valuable in promoting weight loss.

Strategies for Healthy Eating

- **Eat a balanced diet according to Canada's Food Guide:** Eliminating carbohydrates can be problematic because we need complex carbohydrates in our diet for a variety of reasons. Reducing excessive carbohydrates can be helpful in weight management. Consider incorporating whole grains and low sugar fruits into your diet. Choose high volume and low-calorie foods (e.g. fruit & vegetables, popcorn without butter). Choose high quality extra-virgin olive oil, flaxseed oil, avocado oil for their anti-inflammatory effects. Adequate fiber in your diet has multiple health benefits.
- **Hydration:** Water is absorbed better by the body if it is drunk slowly; eat plenty of fruits and vegetables as a source of hydration.
- **Sleep:** Short sleep duration (less than 6 hours), poor sleep quality and later bedtimes are all associated with increased food intake, poor diet quality and excess body weight.
- **Plate size and division:** Use a small dinner plate. Divide the plate into four quarters- ½ for vegetables, ¼ for protein (e.g. fish, meat, lentils, egg, cheese) and a ¼ for grains/starchy vegetables. Keeping your plate colorful maximizes nutrients and variety. Portion out food for meals and snacks before you eat it
- **Snacks:** Keep healthy snacks in your cupboards, fridge, bag, and car. If you don't have "poor choice" snacks available, you cannot eat them. Choose high protein and high fiber snacks (e.g. healthy nuts, hummus, tuna) to keep you feeling satisfied longer or pre-cut fruits and vegetables.
- **Practice Mindful Eating:** Consider if you are hungry or eating out of habit (e.g. always eating a certain food at specific time of day or when boredom strikes)
- **Grocery shopping:** Use a list and try to plan shopping for when you are not hungry. You will buy less and save money. Buy whole foods, locally grown and in season. Get creative - make your own meals and snacks.

Disclaimer: This handout was compiled by Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists with special training in arthritis care and guidance from a registered dietitian. The goal is to provide evidence-based information - not advice. We recommend you consult a dietitian to determine the best plan of action for you.

For more detailed information, refer to **Additional Resources for Healthy Eating.**

Additional Resources for Healthy Eating

Healthy Eating:

The Arthritis Society website: <https://arthritis.ca> or <https://arthritis.ca/living-well>
For information on Eating Well; Your good food guide; Using supplements to treat arthritis;
Gout and nutrition; Understanding alcohol and arthritis

Dietitians of Canada: www.dietitians.ca or 1-866-979-0000 (press 2 for dietitian)
www.unlockfood.ca for tips on Healthy Eating for Good health, fiber, BMI calculator

2019 Canada Food Guide: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/>

Osteoporosis Canada: www.osteoporosis.ca

Arthritis Foundation: <https://arthritis.org> for Supplement and Herb guide; Foods to avoid

Mayo Clinic: www.mayoclinic.org for information about Mediterranean diet

Allied Health Professionals Association:
<https://www.ahpa.ca/resources/10-steps-to-a-balanced-plate-103/>

Berkley University of California Wellness website: <http://www.berkeleywellness.com/>

Harvard Health Publishing website: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat>
Articles and email updates on health topics – mindfulness, health eating, diet and nutrition

Weight Loss:

- Taking Off Pounds Sensibly www.tops.org
- Weight Watchers www.weightwatchers.ca
- Dietitians of Canada <http://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Weight-Loss.aspx>

Apps and Websites: (Download from AppStore or Get It on Google Play)

- HerbList™ app for science-based summaries on popular herbs (National Center for Complementary & Integrative Health)
- MyFitnessPal calorie counter and nutrition tracker app
- EaTracker by Dietitians of Canada to track eating habits and physical activities

Nutrition articles:

- Diet, Nutrition and Osteoarthritis, M Rayman, *BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders*, Vol 16 Supp 1, Dec 2015 <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2474-16-S1-S7>
- Nutrition Action Healthletter from the Center for Science in the Public Interest: <https://cspinet.org/nutrition-action-healthletter>

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