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**Useful Information: Arthritis**

**Websites**

<http://blog.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/diet-foods-arthritis-pain/>

**Best foods for Arthritis**

Tea - Green, black and white teas are all rich in polyphenols and have strong anti-inflammatory effects. You’ll find the highest polyphenol (EGCG) levels in green (the highest) and white teas. Green EGCG has been shown to be as much as 100 times stronger than vitamins C and E. Studies have shown it also helps preserve cartilage and bone.

Coffee - Coffee also has antioxidant polyphenols ie. they help fight free radicals in the body which cause cell damage. Other research suggests coffee may have a protective effect against gout as well.

The jury is still out when it comes to the link between coffee and increased risk of RA or osteoporosis. Some studies say coffee increases the risk, others do not.

Milk - Some say you have to go dairy-free when diagnosed with arthritis, but there’s no research to suggest that’s actually the case. In fact, studies show no difference between RA patients on a dairy-free diet and those who still consume it.

Juices - Orange, tomato, pineapple and carrot juices are all high in vitamin C which means they have antioxidant properties.

Alcohol - Red wine has a compound in it called resveratrol, which has well-established anti-inflammatory effects. Studies have shown wine consumption is associated with a reduced risk of knee OA, and moderate drinking is also associated with a reduced risk of RA. But many experts question the strength of these studies and argue it’s hard to distinguish confounding factors in this research. Other research shows alcohol’s detrimental effects on arthritis.

Water - If there’s a magical elixir to drink, it’s water. Hydration is vital for flushing toxins out of your body, which can help fight inflammation. Adequate water can help keep your joints well lubricated and can help prevent gout attacks.

T**art cherries -** Tart cherries get their rich red colour and many of their powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant benefits from the flavonoid anthocyanin. These properties make tart cherries a popular research subject, and some investigators compare the effects to [nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs](https://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/treatments/medication/drug-types/nsaids/) (NSAIDs).

**Strawberries -** Strawberries are naturally low in sugar and have more vitamin C per serving than an orange. Vitamin C can lower risk for gout, high blood pressure and cholesterol problems. Research has also shown that women who ate 16 or more strawberries a week had lower C-reactive protein (CRP), a measure of body-wide inflammation linked to arthritis flares and heart disease.

**Red Raspberries -** Like strawberries, these berries are among the highest in vitamin C and anthocyanin.

**Avocado -** The rich, creamy texture of this fruit comes in part from its high content of anti-inflammatory monounsaturated fat. Avocados are also rich in the carotenoid lutein. Unlike most fruits, avocados are a good source of vitamin E, a micronutrient with anti-inflammatory effects. Diets high in these compounds are linked to decreased risk of the joint damage seen in early osteoarthritis.

**Watermelon -** Watermelon is another fruit with anti-inflammatory action; studies show it reduces CRP. It’s high in the carotenoid beta-cryptoxanthin, which can reduce the risk of rheumatoid arthritis, according to studies that followed people’s dietary habits over time. It leads the fruit pack in lycopene, an antioxidant that may help protect against certain cancers and lower heart attack risk, says Dulan.

**Grapes -** “Grapes, both white and darker-coloured varieties, are a great source of beneficial antioxidants and other polyphenols,” says Dulan. “Fresh red and black grapes also contain resveratrol, the heart-healthy compound found in red wine that contributes to cardiovascular health by improving the function of blood vessels.” Resveratrol is also a potent anti-inflammatory. Studies show this bioactive compound acts on the same cellular targets as NSAIDs.

****Should You Avoid Nightshade Vegetables?****

Eggplants, peppers, tomatoes and potatoes are all members of the nightshade family. These vegetables contain the chemical solanine, which some people claim aggravates arthritis pain and inflammation. Are nightshades worth avoiding?

“It is anecdotal, and it certainly might be true for some people, but there are no scientific studies done to prove that they actually cause inflammation or make symptoms worse,” Larson says. Nightshade vegetables are rich in nutrients, making them a worthy addition to your diet. But if you find they trigger arthritis pain, don’t eat them, Larson suggests.

****Omega 3s and Inflammation: Which Fish are Best?****

The best sources of marine omega 3s are fatty fish, such as salmon, tuna, sardines and mackerel. Eating a 3 to 6 ounce serving of these fish two to four times a week is recommended for lowering inflammation and protecting the heart.

## ****Better Grain Choices****

To maximize nutrition while minimising inflammation, stick to whole grains when you shop or cook. Many of these grains are also gluten-free (labelled with a **GF** below), if you have celiac disease or a gluten intolerance.

* **Amaranth-GF:** Although amaranth isn’t officially a grain, its nutrient composition makes it similar to cereal grains. Amaranth is high in protein, has a nutty flavor, and you can pop it like popcorn or turn it into porridge by boiling it in water.
* **Barley:** An ideal addition to soups, stews and risotto dishes, barley is loaded with 6 grams of fiber per cup.
* **Brown rice-GF:** Because it has not had its bran and germ stripped away during processing, brown rice is nutrient-rich. Use it as a replacement in any recipe that calls for white rice, but you’ll need to use more water and adjust cooking times.
* **Buckwheat-GF:** Another pseudo-cereal like amaranth, buckwheat is technically a fruit. Yet you can use this high-protein ingredient in noodles, crepes, pancakes and muffins.
* **Bulgur:** This nutty-tasting grain comes from whole-wheat that’s been partly cracked. Use it in recipes, just as you would rice or couscous.
* **Millet-GF:** Millet is a grass that’s similar to corn. It can be used as an alternative to rice, or added to bread and muffin recipes.
* **Quinoa-GF:** This versatile, high-protein seed is an ideal grain substitute. Research is finding quinoa might suppress the release of immune substances called cytokines, which could be helpful for both preventing and treating inflammation.
* **Sorghum-GF:** This cereal grain is rich in protein. Use sorghum flour instead of white flour in breads, cookies and other recipes.
* **Rye:** Often used to make rye bread, whole rye has been shown in research to suppress hunger, which might make it a useful weight-loss tool.
* **Whole oats-GF:** Steel-cut and other whole oats are high in protein and are naturally gluten free (although most commercially available oats are contaminated with wheat). Have them for breakfast or use them in recipes.
* **Whole wheat:** Swapping whole-wheat flour for white in your recipes will increase your nutrient intake and potentially lower inflammation.

When you buy pre-packaged foods with these grains, make sure they contain the real thing. Some breads and crackers have added brown coloring to make them look like whole grain, or use words like “multigrain” and “wheat” on the package. Look for ‘whole grain’ as the first ingredient on the label.

**Walnuts -** With their high ALA content, walnuts head the nut pack in omega-3 content, and researchers studying their effects have found they lower C-reactive protein (CRP), a marker of inflammation linked to increased risk of cardiovascular disease and arthritis. Eating walnuts regularly can lower cholesterol, relax blood vessels to lessen stress on the heart, and reduce blood pressure.

***Tips:*** Walnuts have a hefty texture that makes them a good centrepiece in meatless dishes. They can be pricey so Moore likes to combine them with other healthy foods. Try a simple stir-fry of broccoli, walnuts and chopped garlic with a few squeezes of lemon juice.

## **Peanuts -** Technically a legume, peanuts are the “nut” with the most protein (about 7 grams per 1-ounce serving). “They’re also cheaper than most nuts, so for people with arthritis trying to managing their weight, for example, they make a filling, inexpensive snack,” says Moore. Peanuts are also a good source of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, and research shows adding them to your diet can help lower “bad” low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and reduce heart disease risk. Peanuts deliver about 12% of your daily magnesium requirement, and may help keep blood sugar under control.

***Tips*:** Use peanut butter in a creamy sauce for vegetables, pasta or chicken. Blend 1/3 cup smooth peanut butter, 1/3 cup of water or broth, 2 tablespoons each fresh lime juice and soy sauce and a dash of cayenne to taste. Look for peanut butters that list only one or two ingredients: peanuts or peanuts and salt.

## **Almonds -** Because almonds contain more fibre than most nuts, they’re a good choice for weight management, says Moore. “You’ll be more satisfied for longer, and you also get some cholesterol-reducing benefits from the healthy fats. They are also a good source of antioxidant vitamin E,” she says. Research suggests the monounsaturated fats from an almond-rich diet lower some markers of inflammation, including CRP.

## *Tips*: Mix slivered almonds into rice and vegetable dishes to add crunch and subtle flavour. “Almonds also make a great snack – try pairing with apples and fresh cherries for a great complementary taste,” she says.

## **Pistachios -** Snack on pistachios to help with weight loss. “Dealing with the shell slows down consumption, which is good for people with arthritis trying to lose a few pounds to take pressure off joints,” she says. Pistachios can also help lower LDL cholesterol and are high in potassium and antioxidants, including vitamins A and E and lutein – a compound also found in dark, leafy vegetables.

***Tips*:** Sprinkle pistachios over Greek yogurt drizzled with honey for a high-protein, high-fibre snack or breakfast. Crushed pistachios also make a flavourful, crunchy coating for fish or chicken.

## **Flaxseed - Flaxseed is one of the richest plant-based sources of the anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acid ALA. Studies show it may help lower overall and LDL cholesterol and reduce the complications of diabetes and heart disease risk. Crushing or milling the flaxseed make it easier for your body to digest and use the ALA, so choose these varieties over whole seeds.**

## ***Tips*: Stir into yogurt along with some fruit or sprinkle onto cereal or salads.**

## **Chia Seeds - Chia seeds are also an excellent source of anti-inflammatory ALA, but their biggest benefit is probably their high fibre content (about 10 grams per serving), says Moore. “The fibre fills people up, which can help control weight,” she says.**

## ***Tips*: Chia seeds absorb liquid easily and take on a jelly-like consistency. Moore takes advantage of this by blending chia seeds with almond or coconut milk, fruit and vanilla extract then chilling the mixture in the refrigerator to create a chia pudding.**

## **Garlic - Garlic is a tasty addition to just about any savory dish. Like onions and leeks, it contains diallyl disulfide, an anti-inflammatory compound that limits the effects of pro-inflammatory cytokines. Garlic, therefore can help fight the pain, inflammation and cartilage damage of arthritis.**

## ***Tips:* Opt for fresh garlic from the produce section of your market because preservatives may be added to bottled garlic and processing may decrease some of its strength.**

## **Turmeric - Curcumin is the active chemical in**[**turmeric root**](https://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/treatments/natural/supplements-herbs/guide/turmeric.php)**; it blocks inflammatory cytokines and enzymes in two inflammatory pathways. Several human trials have shown an anti-inflammatory benefit, which can translate to reduced joint pain and swelling. The yellow spice is popular in curries and other Indian dishes.**

## ***Tips*: It is most effective in combination with black pepper, which helps the body absorb it better – so eat the two together when possible.**

## **Ginger - Gingerol and shogaol are the chemicals in**[**ginger**](https://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/treatments/natural/supplements-herbs/guide/ginger.php)**that block inflammation pathways in the body. Along with its anti-inflammatory properties, some studies have shown ginger can also reduce osteoarthritis symptoms, although other studies did not find such benefit. Ginger is a versatile spice and can go in both sweet and savory dishes. It’s best to use it in its fresh form.**

## ***Tips*: A great way to add ginger to your diet is to boil it into a tea: Put a one- to two-inch piece of fresh ginger root in boiling water for 30 to 60 minutes.**

## **Cinnamon - Cinnamon contains cinnamaldehyde and cinnamic acid, both of which have antioxidant properties that help inhibit cell damage caused by free radicals. Studies say more research is needed to make formal recommendations about its use, however.**

## ***Tips:* Cinnamon is delicious mixed with oatmeal or added to smoothies, but it’s not strong enough on its own to offer a therapeutic effect. Used in combination with other foods and spices, it may offer a cumulative anti-inflammatory effect over the course of the day.**

## **Cayenne - Chili peppers contain natural compounds called capsaicinoids, which have anti-inflammatory properties. Cayenne and other dried chilies spice up sauces, marinades and rubs.**

## ***Tips*: Chilies can be hot, so start with just a dash or two.**

## ***Final Tips***

## **When trying a new spice, start small and add more after you’ve taste-tested your dish. Anywhere from a half teaspoon to a full teaspoon is generally a good place to start for most spices, except cayenne (start with a ¼ tsp or less of cayenne).**

## **A good rule of thumb with spices is “fresh is best.” But experts say bottled spices can pack a punch too. “Spices are already dehydrated so the antioxidants are concentrated in a small, powerful amount,” Larson explains. And remember the wide variety of foods you can spice up. They are wonderful in rubs, marinades and sauces; on steamed or roasted vegetables; mixed into pasta, potatoes, rice, couscous and quinoa; and in soups and stews.**