

Food and Pain



Food is a major, and enjoyable, part of our lives and eating the right sort of food can have an effect on your general health and even your pain levels. Read below about good nutrition, how food can affect pain levels, some great cooking tips and our recommended books.

Nutrition

When you have pain and/or ill health your diet becomes even more important than normal. Those of us with longstanding pain often have digestive problems, sometimes due to the drugs we may be taking. If the problem is severe or longstanding it's best to seek the advice of a nutritionist and always seek advice from your doctor before making any major changes to your diet.

- For optimum function and least strain on your body, try to maintain your ideal weight. For those with arthritis or other joint problems and, less strain equals less pain.
- Avoid too much salt, sugar and alcohol. Sugar provides little nutrition and contributes to weight gain; salt contributes to high blood pressure and water retention. Alcohol is high in calories and can deplete the body of vitamins and minerals. It also potentially interacts negatively with medications.

Food that can affect pain levels

Some foods may help to decrease pain and inflammation, such as: flax seed, hemp or olive oil, oily fish, such as sardines and mackerel, linseeds and pumpkin seeds, bananas, ginger, chilli pepper, brown rice, cooked vegetables such as broccoli and Swiss chard, orange vegetables like carrots and sweet potatoes, and yellow vegetables like summer squash. Also eat plenty of non-citrus fruits.

Cooking tips

- As often as you can, use fresh ingredients for the healthiest option but you could substitute ready prepared ingredients if you wanted to. Convenience foods that are useful are frozen prepared and pre-cut vegetables, chopped garlic in a jar, tins of tomatoes, canned soup, ready-prepared sauces, etc.
- Make double quantities where possible and freeze the unused portions.
- Have fresh fruit as an easy and healthy pudding option.
- Try baking vegetables and fruit. Jacket potatoes are very easy and nutritious. Cut other vegetables into chunks and baste with olive oil. Bake fruit in a little water. Sliced apples, peaches, plums, apricots can all be cooked this way.

- Take great care when lifting pans and taking dishes in and out of the oven. If possible, ask someone else to do the lifting for you. Make sure you don't over-reach or bend too much when using a bottom oven.
- To cut down on a last minute rush **and** the washing up, one-pot or one-dish recipes are very useful.
- When preparing a meal collect all the ingredients that you need together before you start.
- Chop vegetables in stages. Place chopped food in a dish, cover with cling film and put in the fridge till needed. Don't store vegetables in water as the vitamins will leach out into the water.

Recommended Recipe Books

Cousins, Barbara	Cooking Without: recipes free from gluten, sugar, dairy, yeast. Also Vegetarian Cooking Without	Thorsons
Barnard, Dr Neil	Foods that Fight Pain	Bantam
Holford, P, Ridgeway, J	The Optimum Nutrition Cookbook	Piatkus
Savill, Antoinette	The Sensitive Gourmet	HarperCollins
Savill, Antoinette	More From The Sensitive Gourmet	Thorsons

References

The Duke University Medical Center Book of Arthritis

by David S. Pisetsky, Susan Flamholtz Trien
and

Arthritis: What Works

by Dava Sobel, Arthur C. Klein