

## **Using Food To help treat Arthritis.**

Arthritis is a blanket term to describe a disease condition that causes inflammation, pain, and/or swelling in one or more joints in the body. Specific arthritis diseases include Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, and Gout. However, there are more than 100 other diseases and conditions that create arthritis in joints as a secondary symptom. The symptoms of arthritis can impact quality of life and can cause damage to joint as a secondary symptom. Successfully managing arthritis is critical to reducing symptoms and minimizing joint damage.

Here are three recommendations for managing arthritis symptoms: Loose weight, as little as 10 to 12 pounds. Exercise regularly to help reduce pain, even for just 10 to 15 minutes. Protect your joints by choosing low-impact physical activities such as walking and swimming.

There is a growing amount of evidence that suggests that an anti-inflammatory diet can make a difference in arthritis symptoms. This eating pattern focuses on eating foods that reduce swelling in our cells and repair cell damage. Here are the nine diet recommendations.

- Eat more vegetables. Many vegetables contain antioxidants that fight inflammation and repair damage in the body. When we don't get enough antioxidants, arthritis symptoms tend to get worse. Look at colorful vegetables. These provide more nutrition. Choose options with little fat, salt, or sugar.
- Eat more fruit. They have a protective effect. Particularly whole fruits, as they create a protective effect. Choose colorful fruit such as berries.
- Choose more whole grains. Whole grains are rich in fiber. Fiber is important as it helps the body to regularly eliminate waste and toxic molecules. A properly functioning gut cuts down on inflammation and improves nutrient absorption and arthritis symptoms.
- Manage food sensitivities. Many people are sensitive to certain elements in food. This includes gluten, dairy foods, citrus foods, and plants from the nightshade family including tomatoes. Some people find more relief from severe arthritis when avoiding some of these foods. However, the effect can be different with different people. It is best to work with a dietitian or a physician to see what affects more.
- Dairy in small amounts. For some dairy can worsen arthritis symptom. However, dairy is necessary in our diets to keep our bones functioning. Usually, small amounts can be tolerated. It is recommended that at least three servings of dairy be included in your diet each day.

- Limit sugary foods. Foods with high sugar can increase inflammation. Choosing foods with no sugar is a great way to reduce the amount eating and improve arthritis. Set a goal to reduce amounts of candy, and sugary beverages. Choose low-sugar options.
- Limit saturated fats and certain oils. Certain fats increase inflammation. Some examples include butter, red meats, coconut oil and sunflower oil. Decreasing consumption of these fats can improve arthritis. Also unsaturated fats with Omega 6 such as corn, sunflower, peanut, and safflower can affect swelling. Switching to Omega 3 fats can reduce inflammation and provide other health benefits. Good sources are olive oil, canola oil and fatty fish.
- Eat less meat. When we cook and process meat a chemical called advanced glycation end products (AGE) is created. This chemical is highly inflammatory and greatly aggravates arthritis symptoms. High AGE concentrations are found in fried, grilled, microwaved, or baked meat. Also, high levels of AGE are found in processed meats such as lunch meats, ham, hot dogs, and jerky. Many individuals find great relief in following a vegetarian lifestyle but reducing the amount of meat eaten to 3 to 4 times per week can also have a beneficial effect.
- Avoid high purine foods. These foods increase uric acid production which can increase swelling and pain in joints. Avoid large intake of anchovies, asparagus, organ meats, herring, mackerel, sardines, scallops and dried beans and peas and alcohol. Some of these foods are okay in moderation.

To help individuals with arthritis begin choosing more foods. A sample eating plan is available from the Parker County Extension Office. Contact our office at 817-598-6168 or email [parker-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:parker-tx@tamu.edu).

Source: Utah State University Extension, Arthritis Foundation and CDC.