

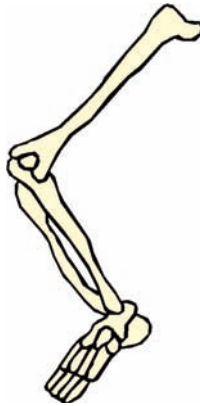


Diet and Arthritis

Osteo-Arthritis

Introduction

Arthritis is a name given to inflammation of bone joints. There are over 100 forms of arthritis but the main two forms are Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) and Osteo-Arthritis (OA). This fact sheet is about the dietary management of Osteo-arthritis (OA).



What is OA?

OA is the most common type of arthritis, and is due to 'wear and tear' on the bone joints. OA occurs more often with increasing age, or from joint over-use such as with sport, or with injury. In OA, the soft 'bumper' called cartilage that coats the ends of the bones wears away, allowing bone 'spurs' to develop. The altered shape of the bone affects the movement of the joint, eventually causing deformities of the joint that affect its movement. This leads to inflammation and pain.

Dietary and lifestyle management of OA



1. Maintain a healthy weight

Try to lose weight if you are overweight (for some great practical information on how to lose weight see www.bdaweightwise.com). Too much body fat increases levels of inflammation in your body, making your joints more painful.

Getting to a healthier weight lowers the levels of inflammation markers in the bloodstream that are used by rheumatologists to monitor your condition. These markers include CRP (C-reactive protein) and ESR (erythrocyte sedimentation rate).

Regular exercise - such as walking, dancing or swimming - help strengthen muscles to support bones.

2. Change your fats

The types of fats and oils you choose can influence levels of inflammation and pain.

Saturated fats (found in full-fat dairy products and processed foods) can increase pain and inflammation in the body; so can too many oils and margarines made from corn or sunflower sources. These are rich in **omega-6 polyunsaturates**, which can also increase general inflammation.

Monounsaturates are 'neutral' fats and do not encourage or worsen inflammation. Choose olive oil, olive oil-based margarines, and 'blended' vegetable oils rich in mono-unsaturated fats. As body cells naturally renew, monounsaturates will replace the omega-6 polyunsaturates within the cell to reduce inflammation.

Be patient - it will take several weeks for any noticeable effect. If you need to lose weight, don't fry foods, avoid pastries, and choose a 'low fat' spread instead.

3. Follow a 'Mediterranean' type of diet

Research shows that a diet containing modest lean meat portions, mono-unsaturated fats and plenty of vegetables can reduce inflammation by helping the body 'mop up' body chemicals which cause inflammation.



Aim for at least four portions of vegetables a day - fresh, frozen or canned, plus at least two servings of fruit. A portion is equal to a 'handful' or a few tablespoons. Choose vegetables of different colours for a wide range of plant nutrients to help reduce inflammation.

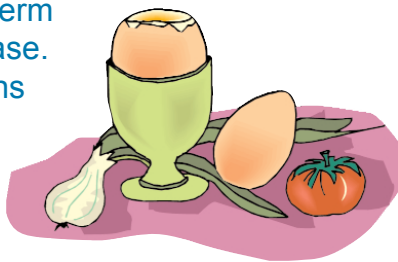
4. Eat more oily fish

Fish with darker flesh such as sardines, mackerel, herring, tuna, salmon, swordfish, marlin, and snapper are rich



in fish oils (omega-3 polyunsaturates). Fish oils can reduce general inflammation, reducing both pain and your long-term risk of heart disease.

Two to three portions a week give maximum health benefit. Omega-3-enriched eggs can be useful if you do not like oily fish.



(Note: girls and women who might have a baby one day, or who are pregnant or breastfeeding, shouldn't eat more than two portions of oily fish a week. Women who aren't going to get pregnant in the future, boys and men can eat up to four portions a week.)

5. Choose calcium-rich foods

Osteo-arthritis and osteoporosis (bone thinning) often occur together.

Choose calcium-rich foods such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, cheese, or low-fat yoghurts to help strengthen bones. Non-dairy calcium sources



include tofu, calcium-enriched soya milks and fruit juices, canned sardines and pilchards, breakfast cereal bars, green leafy vegetables, baked beans, white and brown bread. Aim for at least three calcium-rich food portions each day.

6. Complementary and alternative medicine

Glucosamine sulphate at levels of 1500mg a day helps restore cartilage if taken regularly over several years. Limited research also supports the use of chondroitin sulphate at 800mg a day. People with fish allergy should avoid glucosamine.

Limited medical research suggests that SAME (S-adenosylmethionine) and CMO (cetylmyristoleate) may reduce pain.

Coral calcium has no nutritional benefit over standard calcium supplements and can contain high levels of lead.

If you do not get much sun exposure, you should take a Vitamin D supplement containing 10 microgram (mcg or μg) / 400iu daily. Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium, and also seems to reduce wear and tear in the joint cartilage. A general multivitamin and multimineral supplement can provide useful background fortification.

Expensive dietary supplements are not a good substitute for dietary changes known to reduce the pain and inflammation of osteo-arthritis.

By Catherine Collins RD

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