

Fibromyalgia and Diet

G. Douglas Andersen, DC, DACBSP, CCN

Regardless of your discipline, anyone who has cared for patients with fibromyalgia knows how difficult and frustrating it can be. There have been occasional success stories with a variety of approaches: biofeedback; soft tissue mobilization; electroacupuncture; manipulation; hormones (estrogen, thyroid); exercise; and a variety of supplements including malic acid; magnesium; selenium; vitamin E; vitamin B¹; 5-hydroxy-L-tryptophan; omega-3 fatty acids; and proteolytic and digestive enzymes. But we are far from a cure; anyone who comes up with the nutritional or pharmacological magic bullet will be able to buy an island and fly there in his or her private jet.

Two years ago, there was an interesting study conducted on 33 fibromyalgia patients.¹ Eighteen female fibromyalgia patients were compared to 15 female controls. The study group was placed on a raw-food vegan diet consisting of fruits; vegetables; legumes; cereals; nuts; and seeds. The control group continued on their regular diet. After three months, the groups were given a series of tests and questionnaires. Researchers reported that the raw-food group had:

1. improved sleep;
2. less joint pain;
3. weight loss;
4. increased feeling of well-being;
5. reduced serum cholesterol; and
6. reduced urine sodium.

This diet eliminated all refined carbohydrates and was low in sodium and fat. It is yet another example of a recurring theme in therapeutic nutrition. When macronutrient intake is shifted to foods that reduce the synthesis of pro-inflammatory substances, improved function often results. It will certainly take a motivated patient to follow this diet, and change will not occur overnight. But with such a frustrating disorder, eating "health food" is clearly worth a try.

Reference

1. Kaarginen K, Lammi K, Hyphen M, et al. Vegan diet alleviates fibromyalgia symptoms. *Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology*, 2000; 29:308-313.

G. Douglas Andersen, DC, DACBSP, CCN
Brea, California
gdandersen@earthlink.net

