

Nutrition to Soothe the Joints

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Osteoarthritis (OA) is the [most common form of inflammatory degenerative joint disease](#) and the second most common cause of long-term disability among middle-aged and older adults in the United States.¹ More than 40 percent of arthritis sufferers in the U.S. [report using complementary and alternative medicine](#), including dietary supplements. The use of alternative remedies has increased since the FDA issued health warnings about anti-inflammatory drugs such as Celebrex.²

Maintaining healthy joints through proper posture, joint alignment, muscle tone and nutrition is part and parcel of chiropractic wellness care. In addition to structural misalignment, muscle weakness and injury, a number of dietary factors that promote inflammation and oxidative stress are [believed to play a role in the development of chronic joint diseases](#).³⁻⁴ When it comes to nutrition, maintaining healthy joints is a two-edged sword: One should limit dietary habits that promote arthritis and then increase those that maintain healthy joints.

Diets That Promote Arthritis

Diets high in processed foods, sweets, sugars, [meats grilled and fried at high temperatures](#), baked breads, chips, cookies and pastries all [promote inflammation](#), oxidative damage and degeneration via glycation. Glycation is a degenerative aging process of micro-adhesions, called cross linking, that deforms our tissue's protein structure and function. A menu too high in omega-6 fatty acids (soy, safflower, sunflower, corn oils), trans-fats (hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated fats) and saturated fats (non-lean meat, eggs, full-fat dairy) [strongly promotes inflammation and subsequent degeneration](#).⁵⁻⁷

Furthermore, diets like the above tend to be too high in calories, upset blood sugar balance and lead to weight gain. [Being overweight greatly increases the stress on the low back, hip and knee joints](#).⁸⁻⁹

Diets That Promote Healthy Joints

Conversely, diets high in relatively unprocessed, low-temperature-cooked (even raw) foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids (chia and flaxseed, walnuts, fatty fish, grass fed meats) and high antioxidant foods (fruits, vegetables, beans, herbs, spices and tea) are [anti-inflammatory](#).¹⁰

There are other nutrients that may promote joint health. Glucosamine and chondroitin are well-known. [Gelatin](#), MSM (a naturally occurring sulfur compound in our diets), [vitamin D, folic acid and B12 may play a role as well](#).¹¹⁻¹³ Even simply [enhancing hydration can help back pain](#)!¹⁴

A Joint-Soothing Smoothie

It is not always easy to make big dietary changes and follow them daily. A quick and easy way to get lots of good antioxidant and anti-inflammatory nutrition without taking more pills is to replace one pro-oxidant, pro-inflammatory snack or meal (usually breakfast) with a smoothie recipe similar to the following:

- 8 ounces (1 cup) ice water or iced green tea
- 1/2 cup frozen berries
- 1/2 cup plain or vanilla low-fat yogurt and/or one scoop whey protein, vanilla
- 1-3 teaspoons fish oil* and/or 1-3 teaspoons flaxseed, ground
- 1-3 tsp. plain gelatin and / or 1 tsp. MSM powder
- Vitamin D drops, emulsified, 400-800 IU
- Optional: Stevia to sweeten to taste

*Some fish oil formulas include vitamin D. Emulsified oils will blend more easily.

Blend water, vitamin D and fish oil first, then blend in the other ingredients. Adjust the recipe to suit your particular taste. Serve cold and enjoy daily. Most middle-aged and older individuals will notice a difference in their joints within eight weeks.

The green tea and berries mix supplies high-antioxidant plant nutrients (phytonutrients). The gelatin and MSM [provide sulfur and amino acids](#) that are needed for cartilage and ligament formation.¹⁵

Vitamin D is important for joint health, especially for those at risk for osteoporosis.¹⁶ The fish oil and flaxseed provide the anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acids. The yogurt and whey supplies protein to help create a satisfying and balanced meal. Also, they, along with colostrum, the "first milk of mammals," are dairy nutrients that may have a role in healing [GI tracts harmed from too much aspirin or ibuprofen \(NSAIDS\)](#).¹⁷⁻¹⁹

Increasing joint-healthy nutrition while decreasing joint-inflaming foods provides more potential benefits than just adding pills to a suboptimal diet. Plus, you have to eat anyway, so there is likely little impact on the food budget. The key is to do a little homework to find the best tasting ingredients and adjust them to taste.

The above-mentioned recipe is only several hundred calories at most, so it can also support weight-loss plans. Indeed, as oxidation, glycation and inflammation are associated with all the common aging diseases, the potential anti-aging benefits are plentiful.

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