



## Prevent Arthritis Inflammation

## Arthritis

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## Foods That Aggravate Arthritis Symptoms



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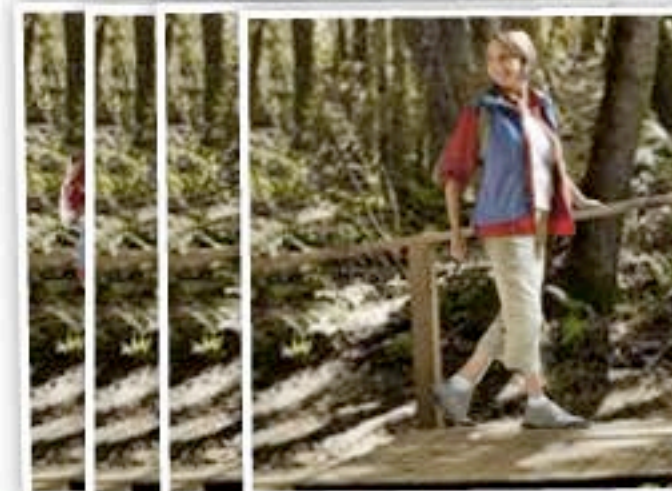
By Stephanie Tweito Jacob

Can the foods you eat intensify arthritis symptoms? Maybe, says Lona Sandon, registered dietitian, spokeswoman for the [American Dietetic Association](#) and assistant professor of clinical nutrition at University of Texas Southwestern in Dallas.

There is some indication, she says, that foods that are pro-inflammatory -- meaning they lead to inflammation in the body -- could worsen arthritis (which is often a result of inflammation). But ultimately there's little scientific consensus on whether particular foods are more problematic than others. "What we do find when you delve into the research is that it's highly individual," she says. "What one person reports as a problematic food, another person may not."

To pinpoint what in your diet may aggravate symptoms, Sandon says to keep a food record of exactly what you eat and drink and track how you feel along with that. Three to four weeks of doing so should help determine any patterns in symptoms associated with a particular meal or food.

Just one 200-mg CELEBREX a day can provide 24-hour relief for many with arthritis pain and inflammation.\*


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\*Individual results may vary.  
This dosing is for osteoarthritis.

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So get your notebook and pen ready – these are the foods that may worsen your arthritis:



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### Saturated fats

There is some evidence that diets high in saturated fats – particularly a type called arachidonic acid – can increase inflammation in the body, says Sandon. Foods that are rich in arachidonic acid include animal proteins such as red meat, poultry, pork, egg yolks, shellfish and full-fat dairy products.

Because the average American diet typically includes meat at lunch and dinner, cutting back to meat to once a day – and keeping the portion size to three or four ounces – could be enough to feel a difference, says Sandon.

Not all fats have adverse effects, however. Taking an omega 3 fatty acid supplement of at least two grams per day has been shown to have an anti-inflammatory effect on arthritis, says Sandon. Eating more fish rich in omega 3's, like salmon and halibut, is also a good idea.

### Nightshade vegetables

A common claim is that this group of vegetables – which includes potatoes, peppers and tomatoes, to name a few – may negatively impact symptoms. The information is primarily anecdotal, says Sandon, so the key is to track what you're eating and drinking to see if these vegetables affect you.



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That doesn't mean other produce should be avoided. Research suggests the opposite: that eating a plant-based diet (more fruits, vegetables, and plant-based proteins) could help, says Sandon. "The various plant compounds and antioxidants in fruits and vegetables have anti-inflammatory properties," she says. "Essentially, they act like aspirin or ibuprofen, which are anti-inflammatory, they're just not in the concentrations the drugs are so you don't see immediate relief. You have to build up that intake over time."

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This is a case where more food can be good for you. "Most people eat maybe one fruit and one vegetable per day," she says. "We need to up that to about four or five cups of fruits and vegetables per day." Doing so over-time may help "some of that morning stiffness to be relieved," she says.



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#### **Refined grains and carbohydrates**

Diets high in refined grains, refined carbohydrates and added sugars are thought by some to produce more inflammation in the body, though research hasn't confirmed this yet. "The general advice is to follow the current dietary guidelines put out by the [USDA](#) and the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) and that is to make at least half of

your grains whole grains," says Sandon.

Arthritis sufferers also have about a two times greater risk of getting heart disease, says Sandon. "We know that simple sugars and saturated fat are not good for the heart and that whole grains are."

#### **Alcohol**

Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol – in particular beer – has been shown to increase the risk for [gout](#), a form of arthritis.

Alcohol can increase levels of uric acid in the body (an overload of uric acid is the main cause of gout).

Those with other forms of arthritis may or may not be affected by alcohol – it's very individual, says Sandon. "Some say if they have a drink with dinner, they may be more achy and stiff the following morning."



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In addition to these suspect foods, the following lifestyle factors can exacerbate arthritis:



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## Obesity

Those with arthritis, in particular osteoarthritis, tend to have more obesity. This does more than create extra strain on the joints, says Sandon. "We used to think body fat just sat there and did nothing, but we now know that body fat actually produces hormones that keep the body in a kind of constant stressed state, which promotes an inflammatory response." Over time, that can

damage arteries, build up cholesterol, and raise blood pressure, Sandon says.

Reaching a healthy BMI between 20 and 25 is ideal, says Sandon, but even just a 5 to 10 percent weight loss would benefit what's happening metabolically in the body.

## Not exercising

"Years ago, they thought exercise would further damage joints," says Sandon, "but we've since discovered that was really bad advice. People with arthritis should move their body regularly and move their joints in all range of motions."

**Aerobic exercise and resistance training** can both help. Adults should aim for at least 30 minutes five to six days a week; for those who need to lose weight, the recommendation is 60 minutes five to six days a week, says Sandon.



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## The bottom line:

A plant-based diet high in fruits and vegetables can make a difference in the long run, says Sandon. If you change your diet, could feel relief in two to three months. "Food is not as potent as medication, but it can help over-time."

"It's really about overall dietary pattern and lifestyle on an on-going basis, not just what you might have eaten the night before. It's what we do as a lifestyle day in and day out that makes the biggest difference," she says. "That goes for other chronic diseases, too, not just arthritis."