



Can what you eat reduce your pain?

By Dr. Uday Jani
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Many Americans experience ongoing pain. More than 76 million Americans report ongoing pain to their physicians each year.

Pain relief doesn't always come in a pill bottle. There are better solutions, many found in your refrigerator, spice rack, and garden. The right mix of foods, herbs, and supplements can be extraordinarily effective in managing chronic inflammation and pain - no prescription required.



Uday Jani

Doctor, what should I eat?

I advise my patients to follow the Mediterranean diet. Evidence abounds to show that people who choose lean proteins like fish and poultry, plant-based foods like beans, fresh fruits, and vegetables, and olive oil, enjoy longer, healthier lives.

These food choices have proven to be beneficial for people with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), according to recent studies that show a decrease in joint tenderness and an improvement in a sense of well-being as a result of following the Mediterranean diet.

In addition, I sing the praises of garlic and onions.

Garlic's myriad benefits include curing toothaches, reducing the aches and pains of arthritis, aiding digestion, treating coughs and preventing hypertension. And onions are one of the richest sources of flavonoids (antioxidants), which have been shown to inhibit inflammation in patients with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

Consult your spice cabinet

I also talk about the importance of spices. Here are some I recommend:

- Turmeric. Turmeric is recognized as a potent anti-inflammatory agent, mainly through the spice's active ingredients,

curcuminoids. Turmeric should be from a quality source and is most bioavailable when heated, making it ideal for stirring into a cup of hot tea or warm milk, for sprinkling on roasted cauliflower, or in a variety of Indian dishes.

- Ginger. Ginger reduces inflammation, lowers blood pressure and is of great value as a digestive aid. Other uses include: relief from arthritis or muscle soreness; menstrual pain; chest, lower back and stomach pain; upper respiratory tract infections, cough, and bronchitis.

- Willow bark. Willow bark is used as a fever reducer, mild pain reliever, and an anti-inflammatory agent.

- Comfrey-containing creams. These creams have been found to significantly reduce inflammation and pain associated with sprains and muscle injuries.

Essential oils to relieve pain

While studies on essential oils are not entirely conclusive, there are two oils I recommend:

- Clove essential oil. Clove is commonly used as a dental pain reliever, and it may also be effective for treating dry socket when combined with a zinc oxide paste.

- Peppermint oil. Peppermint is one of the most popular remedies for alleviating intestinal gas and abdominal cramps. In addition, a dab or two on your temples provides welcome relief from a migraine headache.

Start slowly with supplements

Before starting on a supplement regimen, take note of these safety precautions:

- Check with your physician to ensure the supplement will not interfere or react badly with any current medications you are taking.

- Only choose tested, standardized, single-name supplements from a high-quality company.

- Read the label carefully and understand what you're taking.

Dr. Jani cautions his patients about jumping in with too many additions or changes to a diet all at once. He suggests starting slowly with some of the more

common supplements, such as:

- Magnesium glycinate, which can help reduce frequency of migraines and eliminate menstrual cramping. Taken at night, this supplement can also help you fall quickly and easily to sleep.

- Vitamin D is frequently seen at insufficient levels in Americans, and is important in regulating blood pressure, immune function and cell growth.

- Fish oil supplements appear to be a safer alternative to ibuprofen for reducing arthritic neck and back pain.

While there are a number of foods, plants and herbs with medicinal qualities, there is no single one that serves as a magic bullet for pain relief. Instead, a synergistic effect often occurs with a blend of different compounds. The wisest, safest route is following a well-balanced, healthy diet, and choosing

supplements and herbs in consultation with your physician.

Download the cheat sheet

Download the Reduce Pain, Eat Well Cheat Sheet at beebehealthcare.org and put it on your refrigerator to remind you to make healthy choices every day. If you are looking for a physician within the Beebe network, use the Find a Doctor database at beebehealthcare.org/find-a-doc or call the Physician Referral Service at 645-3332. ●

Editor's note: Dr. Uday Jani is a Board Certified Internal Medicine physician at Shore View Personalized Medical Care. Dr. Jani is Fellowship Trained in Integrative Medicine.

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