

Nutrition

...every meal dramatically influences our mood
 ~ John A. McDougall, MD ~

Many of us have a love-hate relationship with food—we love to taste and eat; we hate the pounds we collect from loving it too much. Aside from the body results of eating and drinking, our mental health also suffers or benefits from what we ingest. Because our brain is so important to pain management, this may be as important a consequence as the weight we gain or lose.

People in physical or mental pain know the role eating and drinking plays for them. When we need relief, food is something we can go to for comfort or diversion. Keeping our pantry and frig stocked with healthy, whole-food snacks and meal components can be the first defense to eating mindlessly.

Adele Davis gives us a template for daily eating: "Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and dinner like a pauper." This pattern allows us to burn calories during the active part of our day and sleep better at night. The best defenses against snacking unjudiciously is to eat sufficiently at mealtimes—making sure to include lean proteins and whole foods—and drinking adequate water. Processed foods contain less fiber and are often high in simple carbohydrates, leaving us feeling like we're missing something—a setup for craving sweets and high-fat foods.

*Thousands have lived
 without love,
 not one without water.*
 ~ W. H. Auden ~

Eating well doesn't require a degree in nutrition, but it helps to be aware of some simple principles regarding the food we eat. The following list contains ways of eating that either help us or hinder our management of pain:

Hinders Our Ability to Control Pain	Boosts Our Ability to Control Pain	Examples/Suggestions
<p>Refined foods fail to deliver nutrients the body needs for strong immunity and physical strength.</p>	<p>Whole foods and plant-based foods provide nutrients (vitamins, minerals, and essential amino acids) needed for a strong body and sharp mind.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh fruits & vegetables, whole grains, & legumes • Foods high in omega-3 fatty acids: (highest in cold-water fish/ fish oil—especially salmon), flaxseed meal, Chia seed meal, and walnuts/walnut oil; smaller amounts are found in other nuts, legumes, fruits and vegetables: spinach, blueberries, and avocado. • Raw or lightly roasted nuts (especially walnuts) have a high ratio of heart-healthy unsaturated fat, are known to reduce LDL ("bad" cholesterol) levels, contain high levels of cancer-fighting antioxidants, improve learning and memory abilities, and maybe even ward off dementia.

...continued

Hinders Our Ability to Control Pain	Boosts Our Ability to Control Pain	Examples/Suggestions
Without sufficient water , the body struggles to maintain healthy skin and muscle tone, fight infection, and waste harmful substances and hormones.	Body composition is about 70% water. Sufficient water consumption keeps skin healthy, muscles moving easily, maintains electrolyte balance, and speeds recovery from injury.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recommendations vary, but most nutritionists recommend including the equivalent of 8-10 glasses of water per day (not including coffee and colas).• Drink extra water <u>before</u> undertaking hard work or exercise, not just when you feel thirsty (by then body tissues have suffered effects of dehydration).
Overindulging in sugar and simple carbohydrates overtaxes the body's production of insulin and causes us to store extra calories as fat.	Reducing sugar and simple carbs leaves more room for healthy food and beverages. Less snacking will leave you hungry enough at the next meal to fill up on healthy food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limit sugar (desserts, sodas, sugary snacks) and simple carbohydrates (white bread, white rice, processed foods).• When a sweet craving strikes, look at the clock and make a deal with yourself to go 20 minutes before responding to that craving (just don't set an audible timer, which will remind you of the craving). Then get busy with something that holds your attention.• Filling up on whole foods will reduce episodes of cravings.

While eating and drinking healthfully goes a long way towards improving our experience with pain, there are aspects of living that we might call "lifestyle nutrition." Dr. Garry Egger, MPH, PhD, director of the Centre for Health Promotion and Research in Sydney, Australia, explains in his book *Lifestyle Medicine*, that a person's life story, patterns of thinking, actions, relationships and lifestyle either keep the body in balance or knock it out of kilter a little at a time. Poor habits and chronic stress result in an inflammation process he calls *metaflammation*—low-grade inflammation now thought to be at the root of many health issues, including cancer. Inflammation is known to elevate the sense of pain. And, just as these items raise or lower inflammation, they may increase or decrease our pain.

Pro-Inflammatory

- *Exercise (too little or too much)*
- *Obesity*
- *Poor Diet (high-fat, low fiber, unhealthy meats, sugars/sugary drinks, , excessive salt, too much alcohol, starvation)*
- *Smoking/second-hand smoke/pollution*
- *Sleep deprivation*
- *Stress, anxiety, depression, burn out*

Anti-Inflammatory

- *Exercise/physical activity/fitness*
- *Healthy body weight*
- *Nutrition (whole foods: fruits/vegetables/ grains, fiber, fish, lean meats, unsaturated fats, alcohol in moderation)**
- *Smoking cessation*
- *Adequate sleep*
- *Mental health, gratitude, pacing, balance*

If you strive to use the nutrition tool in pain management, give yourself permission to gradually make changes for positive results. Just as starvation diets are hard to stick to, making sudden, huge changes to our eating patterns or lifestyle can set us up for dissatisfaction and frustration. Let the experience of improving nutrition be a fun learning experience for the whole family, and you will get better buy-in.

More resources:

- Food & Health: <http://www.livestrong.com/food-and-health/>
Water: http://nutrition.about.com/od/hydrationwater/a/back_pain_water.htm
http://www.e-c.co.nz/foodworks/nzjba/myfiles/hydration_ilsj_monograph_final.pdf, (p 10)
Your Body's Many Cries for Water, by Fereydoon Batmanghelidj, M.D.
Inflammation: <http://nutrition.about.com/od/dietsformedicalldisorders/a/antiinflamfood.htm>
Vitamin D: <http://www.healthying.net/articlelive/articles/85/1/Mayo-Clinic-Study-Suggests-Those-Who-Have-Chronic-Pain-May-Need-to-Assess-Vitamin-D/Page1.html>
Nuts: <http://atlanticmedicinewellness.com/archives/441>
Fibromyalgia: <http://www.livestrong.com/article/107161-fibromyalgia-diet-nutrition/>
-

Consider This... *“The only diet that can be sustained—by anyone—is a diet that allows you to eat until you are full and, at the same time, promotes weight loss and good health.” (The McDougall Program for Maximum Weight Loss, John A McDougall, MD)*

List the main points of this week’s lesson.

List one thing you can do or think differently during this next week to reduce your pain.

Can you identify anything that triggers poor eating habits for you? What will remind you to respect yourself by eating healthfully?

Was there anything said during this week’s session that confused or troubled you?

Do you have any questions from this week’s lesson?

How to open internet links in this document:

If you received this electronically, right click on the web links and select “open hyperlink.”