



## Nutrition Corner



### Fight Arthritis With These Foods

Certain foods can strengthen bones, boost immune systems, and fight inflammation caused by arthritis. Add these foods to your balanced diet to help ease symptoms.

**Fuel Up on Fish.** Salmon, mackerel, tuna and herring are rich in omega-3 fatty acids that fight inflammation. Eat 3 to 4 ounces of fish, twice a week.

**Step Up to Soy.** Soybeans, tofu or edamame, are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and inflammation-busting benefits.

**Opt for Oils.** Extra virgin olive oil is full of heart-healthy fats and oleocanthal which helps reduce inflammation.

**Check Out Cherries.** Studies show the anthocyanins in cherries have a beneficial anti-inflammatory effect. Try strawberries, raspberries, blueberries & blackberries too.

**Go Green (Tea).** Green tea is packed with polyphenols, antioxidants believed to reduce inflammation and cartilage damage.

**Delight in the Dairy.** Low-fat dairy products, like milk, yogurt and cheese, are packed with calcium and vitamin D which increases bone strength.

**Believe in the Broccoli.** Vitamin rich in K and C, broccoli also has sulforaphane, that researchers have found helps prevent or slows the progression of osteoarthritis.

**Go with the Grain.** Whole grains lower levels of C-reactive protein (CRP) in the blood. CRP is a marker of inflammation associated with heart disease, diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis.

## Healthy Living

### Taking Control of Your Health

### UNDERSTANDING ARTHRITIS

**Arthritis is the number one cause of disability in our country.**

Over 50 million Americans have arthritis. 1 in every 5 adults and over 300,000 children suffer with this painful and often debilitating condition. The first steps in overcoming this affliction are learning the facts, understanding your condition and knowing that help is readily available.

**What is Arthritis?** Arthritis is not a single condition, but rather refers to a collection of joint pain and/or disease states. People of all ages, sexes and races have arthritis. It is most common among women and occurs more frequently as people get older. There are more than 100 different forms of arthritis and related diseases. The most common types include rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and osteoarthritis (OA). All types of arthritis cause pain in different ways.

**What Causes Arthritis?** Our joints are protected by cartilage, a firm but flexible connective tissue. Cartilage absorbs the pressure and shock that is created when you move and put stress on your joints. OA is a reduction of cartilage tissue through normal "wear and tear", although an infection or injury to a joint can worsen this natural breakdown of cartilage tissue. Your risk of developing OA could be higher if you have a family history of the disease. RA is an autoimmune disorder, a condition in which your immune system mistakenly attacks your body. These attacks impair the production of fluids that nourish cartilage and lubricate the joints, eventually leading to the destruction of both bone and cartilage tissue.

**What are the Symptoms?** Common arthritis joint symptoms include swelling, pain, stiffness and decreased range of motion. Symptoms may come and go. They can be mild, moderate or severe. They may stay about the same for years but may progress or get worse over time. Severe cases of arthritis can result in chronic pain and the inability to perform everyday activities. Arthritis can cause permanent joint changes, some of which are visible, but often the damage can only be seen on X-ray.

**Diagnosing Arthritis.** Arthritis diagnosis often begins with a primary care physician who performs a physical exam, which may include blood tests and imaging scans to help determine your type of arthritis. An arthritis specialist, or rheumatologist, should be consulted when the diagnosis is uncertain or the arthritis is inflammatory. Rheumatologists manage ongoing treatment for inflammatory arthritis, gout and other complicated cases. Orthopedic surgeons perform joint surgery and joint replacements.

**What Should You Do?** If you are diagnosed with arthritis by your primary care physician or specialist, call your MedWatch Total Lifestyle Coach (TLC) to discuss your options. When medications or surgery have been recommended, your MedWatch TLC may be able to assist you with lifestyle management choices that will help you manage your condition in collaboration with your doctor.

Your MedWatch Total Lifestyle Coach (TLC) is your 'health advocate' and acts as your personal GPS to help navigate the complex healthcare roadmap.

Call (800) 386-5475 for personalized tools and resources to help you maintain your health.

## Healthy Living Newsletter

A MedWatch publication to keep you healthy and informed.



**National  
Arthritis  
Awareness  
Month**

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### Living With Arthritis



Living with osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or another type of arthritis? You might find that living with the condition poses significant challenges. There are many resources available to help you manage your arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation provides excellent information and practical tips for daily living and more. ([arthritis.org](http://arthritis.org)) Partnering with an appropriate physician can be instrumental in developing a personal management plan to help relieve your arthritis symptoms. In addition to medical treatments, there are many things that you can do to preserve joint function, mobility and quality of life. Here are some key strategies to help you cope with your arthritis:

**Be organized:** Keep track of symptoms, pain levels, medications and side effects. Consult with your doctor.

**Manage your stress:** Chronic arthritis can get you down, and constant pain could lead to depression and anxiety. Counselling from your doctor, or from someone they recommend, may help.

**Improve your sleep:** Poor sleep can aggravate your arthritis pain and cause fatigue. Take steps to improve sleep habits so you find it easier to fall and stay asleep. Avoid caffeine and strenuous exercise in the evenings and restrict screen-time just before sleeping.

**Stay active:** Physical activity helps to optimize both physical and mental health and can play a vital role in managing your arthritis. Physical activity helps keep the muscles that surround affected joints strong, decreases bone loss and helps control swelling and pain. Regular activity replenishes lubrication to the cartilage of the joint, reducing stiffness and pain.

**Eat a healthy diet:** A balanced diet can help you achieve a healthy weight and control inflammation. Avoid refined, processed foods and pro-inflammatory animal-derived foods. Choose whole plant foods that are high in antioxidants and that have anti-inflammatory properties. See the Nutrition Corner for additional information on healthy choices.

**Care for your joints:** Tips for protecting your joints include using your stronger, larger joints as levers when opening doors, using several joints to spread the weight of an object such as using a backpack, gripping items as loosely as possible and by using padded handles. Do not sit in the same position for long periods of time. Take regular breaks to keep mobile and agile.

**Manage pain and fatigue:** Combine your medication regimen with non-medical pain management to improve results. Learning to manage fatigue and being well rested is key to living comfortably with arthritis.