

# Eat to Beat Arthritis

## HOW 7 FOODS AFFECT JOINT PAIN AND INFLAMMATION

Most arthritis sufferers would try almost anything to improve their condition. Fortunately, relief may be as close as your kitchen. That's because some foods are known to reduce inflammation and improve muscle and joint function.

"It's a lot of guesswork. There are a lot of anecdotal things out there," says Lona Sandon, R.D., a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association. "The best first step to take is to really look at your diet and where you can make improvements." Then, consider these specific foods and drinks and how you might add or subtract them for an arthritis-thwarting diet.

### FISH

**HOW IT AFFECTS ARTHRITIS:** Cold-water fish rich in omega-3 fatty acid—including sardines, mackerel, trout and salmon—may help reduce rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis pain by attacking inflammation, Sandon says.

**OTHER REASONS TO EAT IT:** Omega-3 fatty acids promote heart health by lowering risk for heart attack and stroke. They are a good source of protein and low in saturated fat.

### NIGHTSHADE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

**HOW THEY AFFECT ARTHRITIS:** Anecdotal data suggests that some people have more inflammation after eating nightshade fruits and vegetables, such as potatoes, peppers or tomatoes. If this is true for you, try tinkering with substitutes.

**OTHER REASONS TO EAT THEM:** Not everyone reports symptoms with nightshade produce, so don't ignore their nutritional value. Red peppers offer vitamin C and beta carotene. Tomatoes are packed with disease-preventing phytochemicals. Potatoes are good sources of potassium.

### OLIVE OIL

**HOW IT AFFECTS ARTHRITIS:** European countries tend to have lower rates of arthritis than the U.S., and research suggests it may have something to do with the fact that the Grecian diet is high in olive oil, Sandon says. "It has an anti-inflammatory effect."

**OTHER REASONS TO COOK WITH IT:** The monounsaturated fat in olive oil can help lower LDL, or "bad" cholesterol.

### GREEN, LEAFY VEGETABLES

**HOW THEY AFFECT ARTHRITIS:** People with osteoarthritis are often deficient in vitamin K, which can negatively affect joint health. Leafy greens are loaded with vitamin K, which may help slow or stop the progression of osteoarthritis, according to Arthritis Foundation research.

**OTHER REASONS TO EAT THEM:** Dark, leafy greens provide vitamin C, folate and eye-healthy carotenoids. They also may lower heart disease and cancer risk.

### APPLES

**HOW THEY AFFECT ARTHRITIS:** Green apples are a good source of malic acid, which people with the arthritis-related condition fibromyalgia may have difficulty creating on their own.

Plus, Sandon says, vitamin C and malic acid fight inflammation in people with rheumatoid disorders.

**OTHER REASONS TO EAT THEM:** A medium-sized apple has only 80 calories but is a good source of potassium and fiber, according to the American Dietetic Association.

### GREEN TEA

**HOW IT AFFECTS ARTHRITIS:** Studies are showing that green tea may thwart inflammatory chemicals much in the same way that some prescription drugs do, according to the Arthritis Foundation.

**OTHER REASONS TO DRINK IT:** Green tea is a low-calorie drink high in antioxidant catechins and flavonoids, which help fight certain types of cancer and heart disease. Just watch the caffeine—while green tea contains less caffeine than coffee, it still has about 50 milligrams per cup.

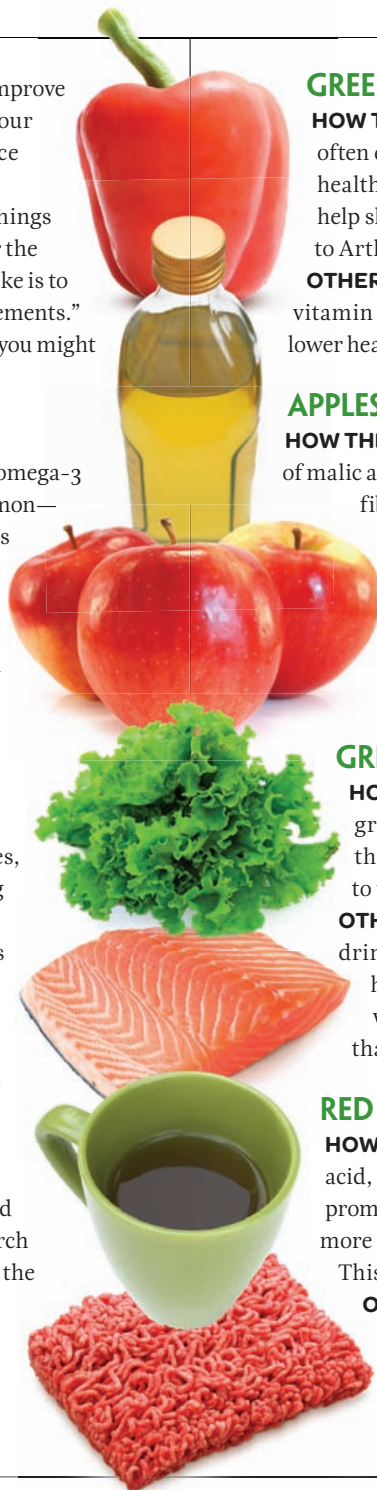
### RED MEAT

**HOW IT AFFECTS ARTHRITIS:** Meat is high in arachidonic acid, which Sandon says has been shown in some studies to promote joint inflammation. "When you eat less meat and more fish and vegetables, you may have less inflammation.

This is supported in some research," she says.

**OTHER REASONS TO EAT LESS OF IT:** Eating less meat may help you lose weight and cut down on fat and cholesterol. A portion of lean meat or poultry should be 5 to 7 ounces—roughly the size of a deck of cards.

—By Laurie Davies





## ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION- APPROVED

From groceries to appliances to gardening tools, the Arthritis Foundation issues an “Ease-of-Use” logo on common household products it has tested and found easy to open and close or comfortable to operate for people with arthritis. Access a printable brochure at [arthritis.org/media/EOU/eou\\_brochure.pdf](http://arthritis.org/media/EOU/eou_brochure.pdf).

## BE GENTLE WITH YOUR JOINTS

Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis, affecting more than 27 million Americans. Minimize your risk while protecting your joints with these dos and don'ts:

- ▶ **Do** keep your weight down. For every one pound you shed, you'll lower the load you exert on your knees by four pounds.
- ▶ **Do** exercise. Exercise keeps your joints flexible and improves muscle strength. If pain is a barrier, consider an aquatic exercise program.
- ▶ **Don't** sit still. Changing positions regularly can loosen muscle and joint stiffness.
- ▶ **Do** maintain good posture, which will protect the joints in your neck, back, hips and knees.
- ▶ **Don't** ignore pain. If you experience pain after an activity, you may have overstressed your joints.

Source: Arthritis Foundation