

Eating Guidelines for Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a condition involving pain and tenderness all over the body that lasts longer than three months. Pain is often in your joints, muscles and tendons. Other symptoms can include:

- feeling tired and weak
- headache
- depression
- anxiety
- sleep problems

These symptoms can make it hard for you to work or do daily tasks like grocery shopping and cooking.

Fibromyalgia affects 2% of people. It occurs more often in women than men. Fibromyalgia is treated with medicine, exercise, diet changes and supplements. While there is no specific diet that can prevent or treat fibromyalgia, you can manage some of your symptoms when you:

- eat well
- have a healthy weight
- stay active



Steps you can take

- Follow Canada's Food Guide. Eat foods from each of the four food groups to get the range of nutrients your body needs. Choose foods that are low in sodium (salt) and fat and sugar.
- Have three meals every day and healthy snacks in between. Don't skip meals. This helps to keep your energy up so you feel less tired.

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- Drink enough fluids to stay hydrated. Aim for 9-12 cups of total fluids per day. Fluids include water and other beverages such as milk, juice, soups, coffee and tea. Your urine will be dark yellow if you are not drinking enough fluid. You may also feel more tired.
 - Limit caffeine, especially if you have trouble sleeping at night. Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, and chocolate and cola drinks. Health Canada suggests adults should have no more than 400 mg of caffeine per day. That's about 3 cups of brewed coffee.
 - Maintain a healthy weight.
 - Keep a food journal. Write down all foods and beverages you consume for a few weeks. Also take note of your symptoms. Look for patterns to see if certain foods make your symptoms better or worse.
 - Be active. Exercise can help reduce pain and depression. It can also help:
 - increase feelings of well-being
 - make you feel less tired
 - improve physical strength and ability
 - Get some aerobic exercise at least twice a week. This may help decrease your symptoms. Aerobic exercises are ones that increase your heart rate like walking, swimming and dancing.
 - Get enough sleep. Practice good sleep habits, such as going to bed and getting up at the same time each day. Limit daytime naps. They may make it harder to sleep at night.
 - Choose foods high in omega-3 fat. This type of healthy fat comes mainly from fish such as salmon, rainbow trout and sardines. Health Canada recommends that you enjoy two 75 gram servings of fatty fish each week. For more information on food sources of omega-3 see the Additional Resources section on this handout.
 - Talk with a Registered Dietitian if you do not eat a variety of foods or enough food. Dietitians can help you make a plan to eat well and meet your nutrient needs.

Special Considerations

Many people with fibromyalgia take different herbal or nutritional supplements to try and improve their symptoms. Fish oil supplements, chlorella, D-ribose and anthocyanidins have all been studied in people with fibromyalgia. Early studies show some small benefit. Larger studies need to be done before these products can be recommended. Remember that some supplements can affect how medications work. If you want to try herbal products, talk with your doctor or pharmacist first.

Some people feel better when they follow a vegetarian diet that avoids fish, meat and poultry, and sometimes eggs and milk products. If you are vegetarian, speak to a Registered Dietitian. She can help you plan your meals and snacks to make sure you are getting the nutrients your body needs.

Following diets such as a raw or elimination diet is not recommended. These diets can be hard to follow and you may not get all of the nutrients your body needs.



Additional Resources

- Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>
- Food Sources of Omega-3 Fats:
<http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=RbCR&id=JMHPUQE=&PreviewHandout=bA==>
- Canadian Arthritis Society - Fibromyalgia: <http://www.arthritis.ca/types%20of%20arthritis/fibromyalgia/>

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