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Arthritis Care Week 8 – 14 May 2017

8 Top Nutritional Tips on How Your Diet Can Help Manage Arthritis

Registered nutritionist, Dr Emma Derbyshire from the Health and Food Supplements Information Service shares her nutritional tips for arthritis below:

1. Maintain a healthy body weight

When considering the role of nutrition in arthritis management, it is important to look at body weight. Being a healthy body weight, typically defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) sitting between 19 and 25, can help to ease pressure on the joints caused by carrying excess weight. NHS Choices has an excellent BMI calculator that can be used¹. The joints that are usually affected by excess weight are the hips, knees, ankles and feet and just losing a few pounds can make all the difference in taking pressure off the joints².

2. Eat oily fish

Current advice is that people should eat at least two portions of fish a week, with one of these portions being oily fish (one portion is defined as 140g). Unfortunately, average intakes fall far short of this amount. Findings from the latest National Diet and Nutrition Survey shows that **the average UK adult eats about half a portion (54-87g) of oily fish each week**³.

Fish body and liver oils provide omega-3 essential fatty acids which have been traditionally used to support joint health. Fish liver oil is also rich in vitamins A and D which are important in maintaining healthy joints. So, if you do not like, or eat enough oily fish, it may be worth considering an omega-3 supplement to help top up dietary intakes.

3. Top up Vitamin D

A growing body of evidence has linked vitamin D to joint health. Vitamin D helps to protect bones mainly by interacting and increasing the absorption of calcium. When bones become fragile this can contribute to fractures and musculoskeletal pain. Very often joint pain can be an indicator of low vitamin D status.

Whilst most of us can get enough vitamin D from sunlight from about late March/early April, it is not possible to obtain vitamin D from sunlight during autumn and winter and there are

few food sources for the nutrient. Public Health England advises that everyone should consider taking a 10 microgram vitamin D supplement daily throughout autumn and winter and 'at risk' groups such as individuals who are housebound, who cover up for religious reasons, or who have darker skins should take a vitamin D supplement all year round⁴.

4. Boost Vitamin C

Vitamin C helps to maintain connective tissues in the body, particularly those which are reliant on collagen, for example cartilage, which can help to maintain healthy joints. Most vitamin C can be provided from foods, so eating vitamin C-rich foods such as citrus fruits, berries and peppers may help in the drive to keep joints healthy.

5. Consider Glucosamine

Glucosamine is present naturally in the body, helping to make glycosaminoglycans and glycoproteins which are the building blocks of our cartilage, tendons, ligaments and synovial fluid. Animal studies and some human research has shown that glucosamine supplements may help to delay the breakdown of cartilage and aid repair⁵.

6. Green-Lipped Mussels

Green-Lipped Mussels, also known as *Perna canaliculus* are uniquely found in New Zealand waters. These have traditionally been used to support joint health, with benefits being attributed to their lipid profile which includes the omega-3 fatty acid eicosatetraenoic acid⁶. Green-Lipped Mussels can be found in some supplement brands.

7. Hyaluronic acid

Hyaluronic acid is a versatile large molecule that is naturally present in the connective tissues of the body, which includes joint cartilage and synovial fluid. It is a powerful antioxidant and is best known for its ability to bond water to tissue. It is this characteristic that contributes to hyaluronic acid playing a key role in the cushioning and lubricating of joints⁷.

Some foods, typically soups and stews made with unskinned chicken, can be a good way to raise hyaluron levels. Hyaluronic acid can also be found in some supplement brands.

8. Curcumin/Tumeric

Curcumin is a component of the golden spice turmeric. Many trials have looked at the effects of curcumin, with promising results seen in patients with arthritis. Curcumin can come in many different forms, such as capsules, tablets and powder⁸.

For further information or to arrange an interview with an HSIS spokesperson, please contact the HSIS press office hsis@nexuspr.com or call 020 7052 8888. Out of hours please call 07730 682111 or 07482 107207

ABOUT HSIS

HSIS (the Health and Food Supplements Information Service) is a communication service providing accurate and balanced information on vitamins, minerals and other food supplements to the media and to health professionals working in the field of diet and nutrition. Find out more at www.hsis.org.

References:

¹ <http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/loseweight/Pages/BodyMassIndex.aspx>

² <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Arthritis/Pages/Livingwitharthritispg.aspx>

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551352/NDNS_Y5_6_UK_Main_Text.pdf

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-publishes-new-advice-on-vitamin-d>

⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22361198>

⁶ Derbyshire EJ (2017) Joint Health: Latest Supplement Innovations. Complete Nutrition Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 18-20.

⁷ Derbyshire EJ (2017) Joint Health: Latest Supplement Innovations. Complete Nutrition Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 18-20.

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23143785>