



## HOW NUTRITION AFFECTS BACK PAIN

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You may wonder how your diet may possibly relate to your back pain. After all, your pain may be very localized, appearing as a very specific 'structural' problem, whether it be caused by muscle spasms, a slipped disc, or inflamed joints.

What you have to remember, however, is that foods are the building blocks of your body. They build every cell, including build your cartilage, discs, bones, ligaments, tendons, muscles.

Let's look at a few ways of how we can connect the dots between your back pain and your diet:

### **Water / Hydration**

Adequate water (not soda) intake is crucial for healthy joints and cartilages, which include your vertebral discs. If you are dehydrated (i.e. caffeine is a dehydrating compound) your cartilage cells, which should be nicely saturated with water, get spry and dry. If this affects your vertebral disks, you can see how they can eventually lose their natural shape and pliability and start to slip out of their normal place. Water is also crucial for proper muscle function. A dehydrated muscle is tired and cannot fulfill its function as well.

Drinking 8 x 8 oz. glasses of water every day, in non-caffeinated form, such as plain, filtered water or herbal teas is a good start and can make a big difference.

### **Mineral Status for Bone Health**

Besides water, minerals – and not just calcium, are crucial to build healthy bones. Many people are not aware that the mineral magnesium is also required in large amounts to build healthy bone mass and for many other body functions. Most Americans' diet is deficient in magnesium. In fact, a diet high in calcium but deficient in the other bone building minerals can actually produce brittle bone. Additionally, our 'SAD' - Standard American Diet high in protein and sugars draws these important minerals out of our bones – calcium, magnesium, zinc, and numerous others.

### **C for Cartilage Health**

How many servings of fruits and vegetables did you consume today? Was it the recommended 7 or more? Vitamin C is crucial for building cartilage and collagen for healthy tissues. Considering how little most Americans consume of the produce category – it's not wonder that so many later on struggle with degenerating joints and aging skin (another type of tissue). Our bodies just don't get enough of it to cover everything vitamin C has to do. The protective role of vitamin C goes far beyond our skin and gums. Cardiovascular diseases, cancers, joint diseases and cataracts are all associated with vitamin C deficiency and can be partly prevented by optimal intake of vitamin C.

### **M for Muscles**

Muscular stress produced by bad posture, poor mechanical function and poor nutrition can lead to muscle spasms. Minerals are again very important for proper muscle function: Calcium contracts

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your muscles and magnesium is required to relax them. This process happens with every muscle moving in the body. If these minerals are not present in sufficient quantities, relaxation can biochemically not occur. Relaxing herbs may be recommended as well by your nutrition therapist to help you ease muscle spasms.

### **Inflammation – The Food Factors**

Most chronic diseases, research is now finding, have at their core an inflammatory component. The first place to look is at your intake of fats: Some fats are pro- and some are anti-inflammatory. Animal fats, also from dairy, and most vegetable oils all promote inflammation, while omega-3 fats (yes, from fish oil and flax) are anti-inflammatory. The body has to stay in a balance, but if you continually overfeed it with pro-inflammatory fats, it's no wonder you are prone to experience inflammation.

Food allergies or sensitivities can also cause inflammation. It is surprising, how many people start feeling so much better by simply eliminating the main culprit foods: dairy and gluten.

Toxins and chemicals (allergic foods can be considered toxins as well) all lead to a burden in the body. Imagine all these chemicals, preservatives and pesticides you ingest daily from processed foods floating around in your tissues. Perhaps your liver is too burdened with other functions and cannot keep up to clear them out. Now we really have a problem. Considering to detoxify your body with a well supported program can have a great impact on how you and your tissues feel.

Your digestive health is another important factor to consider when inflammation is present. A condition called 'leaky gut' refers to a compromised intestinal lining that usually starts with the buildup of an unhealthy intestinal microflora. Eventually, this leads to partially digested food particles entering your blood circulation and this unhealthy set up then promotes food allergies and as well as a large toxic influx of the microbial byproducts. These toxins typically settle in the body's weakest tissues, which can be your joints, where they start to cause irritation and pain. Leaky gut typically manifests in a vicious cycle of chronic health issues, including pain, inflammation, fatigue, fibromyalgia, and even compromised brain function. Rarely are these symptoms connected to your gut health by regular medicine. Healing your gut, thus, may be a crucial component of getting yourself back to health.

### **Conclusion**

As you can see, your food intake can directly influence your back pain. If your back pain is acute and a new issue for you, you may try various physical manipulations, along with a better diet which is beneficial for anyone. However, if you suffer from chronic back or joint pain, it is crucial that you start looking at all the various factors mentioned above, by visiting a knowledgeable nutrition therapist who can help you address the various issues and coach you through the process of finding the main underlying dietary culprits of your discomfort.