



5 Foods That Can Make Osteoarthritis Joint Pain Worse

by KRYSTINA OSTERMEYER

List of Foods That Cause Joint Pain

I was hit by another snowboarder when I was in my mid-20s, resulting in a patellar tendon tear. I spent the winter in physical therapy instead of on the slopes. I tweaked my back while assisting with a patient's toileting needs when I worked as a floor nurse. I spent the rest of the day in the emergency department, leaving with a prescription for cyclobenzaprine. My neck recently started hurting. A neck x-ray indicated that I have early arthritis.

Why am I telling you this, dear reader?

Because I am also seeking an answer – something that might be worsening these chronic aches and pains. In my research, I found that there are certain foods that may worsen joint pain. Does these mean that I need to put away the cupcakes? Well – no, not always. However, reducing intake may improve pain! So, let's take a look at the list of foods that cause joint pain.

What is Osteoarthritis?

Though there are several types of arthritis, when someone states, "I have arthritis in my knee!" it is almost always osteoarthritis – the most common form.

Osteoarthritis (OA) occurs when the cartilage that protects bones begins to wear down. Eventually, the cartilage wears away completely, causing "bone-on-bone" pain.

Though OA can occur at any joint, it is most likely to occur in the knees, hands, spine and hips.

Symptoms of Osteoarthritis

Ever heard someone say, "Oh, my aching back?" Pain is the hallmark symptom of OA. Pain is most common during or after movement.

Other symptoms that commonly occur with OA include:

- Joint stiffness, especially in the morning or when inactive.
- A loss of flexibility.
- A grating sensation when using the joint; crackles and pops during movement are also common.
- Swelling of the soft tissue surrounding the joint.

Foods That Cause Joint Pain

There are a variety of foods that may worsen joint pain, so let's dive into a list of foods that cause joint pain.

1. Added Sugar

Added sugars, such as candy, soda and desserts, should be avoided. According to Healthline, a study that surveyed 1,209 people between the ages of 20 and 30 who drank sugary beverages at least five times per week were three times as likely to develop arthritis as their counterparts who did not consume sugary beverages.

2. Red Meats

Diets that are high in processed meats and red meats appear to increase inflammatory markers such as interleukin-6 (IL-6), homocysteine and C-reactive protein (CRP). Elevated inflammatory markers indicate that there is some form of inflammation in the body.

3. Processed Foods

Processed foods, especially those that are highly processed, such as cereals, fast food and baked goods, are more likely to include added sugars and preservatives, which may be inflammatory.

4. Alcohol

Various studies have found that excessive alcohol consumption is associated with an increased risk of OA. In addition, various studies indicate a link between alcohol and pain associated with other forms of arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis and gout.

5. AGEs

Foods that are high in advanced glycation end products (AGEs) can cause a buildup in the body, which can cause oxidative stress and inflammation. AGEs are naturally found in many foods, such as uncooked animal proteins. However, levels become higher due to the cooking process, especially grilling, roasting and frying. Examples of foods that are high in AGEs include bacon, steak, fried chicken, French fries, margarine, mayonnaise and American cheese.

Foods That Improve Joint Pain

If it seems like you have nothing left to eat – never fear! There are plenty of delicious food choices that may improve joint pain! Below is an anti-inflammatory diet with foods you can incorporate into your everyday meals.

1. Oily Fish

There is a reason that the experts proclaim the benefits of fish – they are rich in omega-3 fatty acids! Omega-3 fatty acids have anti-inflammatory properties. Experts recommend consuming at least one serving of salmon, tuna, mackerel, or sardines weekly. Those who do not enjoy fish can get the same benefit from chia seeds, flaxseeds and walnuts. A supplement that contains krill oil, flaxseed oil, or fish oil is also helpful.

2. Dark, Leafy Greens

Dark, leafy greens are rich in vitamin D, phytochemicals and antioxidants. The combination helps to boost the immune system and aids in the absorption of calcium. Examples include spinach, kale, chard and collard greens.

3. Green Tea

Green tea is thought to reduce inflammation and slow the rate of cartilage absorption. Why? Because green tea is rich in polyphenols, a type of antioxidant.

4. Nuts

Though nuts are calorie-dense, they are extremely beneficial for your health! They contain nutrients such as magnesium, calcium, vitamin E, zinc and fiber. They also contain alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), which is a boon to the immune system.

The Bottom Line...

There is no cure for arthritis. As such, the bulk of treatment involves symptom management.

“Cleaning up” your diet will not improve symptoms completely, but it can certainly help. Not only will reducing foods such as red meats and sugary desserts improve your joint pain, it will also improve your overall health.