The Importance of Diet for Fibromyalgia Management

by SARAH BORIEN

How Eating Well Can Help

As with many things related to fibromyalgia, there is no scientific proof that diet has any direct impact the condition. However, although it may not be able to cure your symptoms, your diet can play a big part in your pain levels and your ability to cope.

Diet Diary

If we've heard it once, we've heard it a thousand times; when it comes to fibromyalgia it's all about trial and error. Ain't that the truth! Keeping a diet diary is one of those things that (unfortunately) will take a bit of effort but (fortunately) will almost certainly teach you something you didn't know.

By documenting everything you eat and drink, and also documenting the severity of your symptoms and any flare-ups that occur, you are likely to start seeing patterns that may influence the foods you eat and can start to think about how to lose weight with fibromyalgia.

This is also a good way of watching out for food allergies or intolerances that may exist aside from your fibromyalgia. Common food intolerances include dairy, wheat and gluten.

Health Diet, Healthy Body, Healthy Mind

Many fibromyalgia sufferers find their symptoms worsen when they are stressed, anxious and depressed, so it's important to look after your mental health as well as your physical health.

Diet can heavily impact your mood, which in turn impacts your behaviour and lifestyle – both of which impact your pain. I have a terrible habit of craving comfort food when my pain is bad; I want to stay inside curled up on the sofa and find happiness inside a pizza box. However, certain chemicals in foods trigger the release of neurotransmitters that heighten sensitivity to pain, so eating fresh foods and limiting your sugar intake will have a basic positive effect on your health.

When your physical pain is bad you need to be as mentally strong as possible, and your diet will heavily impact this. It's important to monitor your diet — avoid consuming lots of caffeine to help you sleep well and avoid artificial sweeteners, which provide a quick boost before a difficult 'come-down.'

Keeping Hydrated

Do any of us really drink enough water? We've been told for years about the reasons to keep hydrated but did you know that dehydration causes back ache and fatigue, as well as the commonly known symptoms like headaches and brain fog?

The Recommendations

There are no strict rules on what to eat and what not to eat, and your diet diary will help you identify your own food demons. However, general advice from medical professionals includes:

- Avoid junk food, particularly if you suffer from IBS as part of your fibromyalgia.
- Reduce your salt and sugar intake, as they can cause tight muscles and fatigue.
- Eat more fish, particularly salmon as it contains Omega 3 – a fatty acid that helps reduce inflammation and increase brain function.
- Avoid alcohol in large amounts, as your body is less likely to be able to cope with toxins and alcohol can lead to inflammation in the body.

When you've got the time and the patience, use your diet diary to play around with your food routine and start looking for patterns. Start reducing your intake of the foods you want to avoid, and start increasing your intake of healthy food and water.

What works for you might not work for someone else, but with the amount of different food and drink we put into our body every day it's no surprise that these things will impact the way we feel.