



— Food for Health —

Wellness Newsletter

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Natural Pain Relief

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You become what you consume.

Natural Remedies for Joint and Muscle Pain

When it comes to physical pain, our first impulse may be to blame our aching knees on the three hours we spent gardening yesterday or our chronic headache on financial stress. Jumping straight to food as the source isn't something we naturally do. But maybe we should consider it as a piece of the pain puzzle!

I'm not saying gardening (or your finances) isn't part of the problem, but food plays a much bigger role in pain than most of us realize.

It all comes down to inflammation.

The Dietary Inflammatory Index

The Dietary Inflammatory Index (DII) is a tool that scores the inflammatory potential of one's diet. Research shows that lower DII scores (pro-inflammatory diets) are strongly associated with:

- A higher risk and severity of chronic pain, including joint pain, headaches, and back pain
- Impaired kidney, lung, and liver function
- A higher risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer
- Impaired memory and cognition
- Faster aging at a cellular level

The bottom line is that inflammatory foods trigger inflammatory reactions in our body, and pain is the most immediate and obvious sign of all. After all, do you know what high cardiovascular disease risk feels like? Me neither.

Even though it's uncomfortable, pain can be a blessing in disguise because it's our body's way of communicating that something is out of balance. It gives us an opportunity to get to the root of the

problem so we can make a change. And when that change involves improving our nutrition, it may even help conditions we didn't know were developing beneath the surface.

Pro-Inflammatory Foods

It should come as no surprise that these foods ranked as pro-inflammatory on the DII:

- Refined white flour products (bread, pasta, pretzels)
- Deep-fried foods
- Commercial baked goods such as snack cakes, cookies, and brownies
- Foods and drinks high in added sugar (candy, granola bars, soda, sweetened tea, etc.)
- Foods containing trans fats (margarine, microwave popcorn, non-dairy creamers, etc.)
- Processed meats

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According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), foods high in salt, sugar, and fat can increase swelling and worsen muscle and joint pain.

In contrast, nutrient-dense, whole foods that are rich in antioxidants, fiber, vitamins, and minerals can help fight swelling and ease muscle and joint pain.

Anti-Inflammatory Foods: Fiber-Filled Whole Plant Foods

The power of plants is real, as evidenced by a recent study showing a 33% drop in C-reactive protein levels (a leading blood marker of systemic inflammation) after only three weeks on a strictly plant-based diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes (beans, split peas, chickpeas, and lentils), and nuts and seeds.

Besides an anti-inflammatory ranking on the DII scale, another thing these whole plant foods all have in common is fiber. But what does fiber have to do with pain? It turns out that whole plant foods reduce not only the risk of abdominal pain, but also muscle and joint pain.

When we eat fiber-rich plant foods, our good gut bugs produce substances called short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs). The SCFAs, in turn, produce anti-inflammatory molecules that act as natural pain modulators, soothing our nerves by stopping the inflammation that triggers physical pain. In a way, short-chain fatty acids function similarly to a built-in, continuous dose of over-the-counter pain relievers.

Along with fiber, whole plant foods are rich in polyphenols that also act as anti-inflammatory substances.

If you're looking for foods that are packed with these anti-pain nutrients and rank as anti-inflammatory on the DII scale, then

you'll want to add these staple items to your grocery list for your next Heinen's trip.

HERBS AND SPICES

There's a reason we deem functional foods like herbs and spices worthy of their own Fx Pillar—they are downright therapeutic!

- **Turmeric powder** – Turmeric scores as the most anti-inflammatory food on the DII scale. Curcumin—the pigment in turmeric responsible for its bright yellow color—exhibits an anti-inflammatory profile stronger and broader than that of powerful anti-inflammatory drugs.

When taken over time, many turmeric preparations can be beneficial for inflammatory diseases of the joints, including purified curcumin, turmeric extracts, and about a half-teaspoon of powdered turmeric daily.

- **Ginger powder** – Research shows that those who used a half teaspoon to one and three-quarters teaspoons of ground ginger over a four to twelve-week period found a significant reduction in inflammatory markers.

Ginger's pain-reducing effects in rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis are up there with ibuprofen, and without damaging the stomach lining. In fact, ginger actually protects the stomach and can help ease nausea.

- **Garlic powder** – Garlic powder is so much more than a savory seasoning for your salad dressings and sauces. It appears that a third of a teaspoon of garlic powder a day significantly improves pain intensity, tender joints, fatigue, and disease activity among

women with active rheumatoid arthritis. Why not give it a try?

Meal Ideas:

- Blend 1/2 teaspoon of ground turmeric and 1/2 teaspoon of ground ginger into your favorite smoothie recipe.
- Sprinkle a 1/3 teaspoon of garlic powder on your salad at lunch or dinner.

BERRIES

If you're going to up your fruit intake, make sure you eat more berries. Blackberries, blueberries, cranberries, raspberries, and strawberries are second only to herbs and spices as the most antioxidant-packed food category.

To illustrate how truly powerful they are, a randomized, double-blind crossover trial showed that about three cups worth of strawberries a day significantly improve pain and inflammation associated with osteoarthritis of the knees.

Meal Ideas:

- Make a smoothie for breakfast using Heinen's frozen strawberries.
- For dessert, enjoy 2 cups of fresh sliced strawberries from Heinen's Produce Department.

NUTS AND SEEDS

All nuts and seeds are good at reducing inflammation, particularly those higher in omega-3 fats like walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseeds, and hemp seeds. Even though sesame seeds are higher in omega-6 fats, they show promise in regard to pain relief.

- **Sesame seeds:** Sesame seeds contain anti-inflammatory compounds, like sesamin and sesamol, which researchers suspect may serve as a potential treatment for various



Mel's Product Picks

inflammatory diseases.

For example, a study of fifty patients with osteoarthritis of the knee found relief after including 1/4 cup of sesame seeds in their daily diet. They described their pain as a 9 out of 10 at the beginning, and by the end of the 2-month study, they rated their pain at a 3.5.

- Sesame oil shows some promise, too, but only when applied topically. Another study found that when compared to leading topical NSAID gels, sesame oil worked similarly for pain and some measures of function when applied topically to osteoarthritic joints.

Meal Ideas:

- Stir a tablespoon of sesame seeds into steel-cut oats or pilafs.
- Sprinkle a tablespoon of sesame seeds over grain bowls, avocado toast, roasted veggies, or salads.

GREEN AND BLACK TEA

Both green and black tea ranked as anti-inflammatory on the DII. Green tea is so anti-inflammatory that it can be used for pain control as a mouthwash after wisdom tooth surgery. Matcha tea is the superman of green tea because it uses the whole tea leaf and is therefore super concentrated.

Homeopathic Supplements and Topicals for Pain Relief

It's always helpful to have a couple of homeopathic remedies on hand for extra support. Here are four that can help you alleviate pain in a more natural way.

- Herb Pharm Turmeric Extract- Made with the rhizome of Certified Organic Curcuma longa plants, this USDA

Organic turmeric tincture is a good alternative to capsules and gummies. Add one dropper full into 2 ounces of water or juice to enhance overall well-being, including muscle and joint support.

- New Chapter Zyflamend- A clinically studied multi-herb blend of rosemary, turmeric, ginger, holy basil, and oregano- all proven to work better together than individually. These herbs support a healthy inflammation response, joint function, mobility, and flexibility, plus herbal pain relief.
- MediNatura T-Relief Extra Strength: Dissolvable tablets made from Arnica, a plant with bioactive components that may help with joint and muscle pain, inflammation, and bruising.
- New Day Organics Sore Muscles and Joint Rub: A soothing, fast-acting botanical balm made from Arnica-infused olive oil for sore muscles and aching joints. Naturally helps to relieve soreness, decrease inflammation, and soothe tension for people with symptoms of osteoarthritis, muscle pain due to overuse, or for post-workout recovery.

Key Takeaway

I have a little sign in my office that reads "You are what you eat". Another way to say it is "You become what you consume". If we want to be as healthy and pain-free as possible, doesn't it just make sense to choose foods that help us feel this way?

** Be sure to check with your healthcare provider before starting any new supplements.*

Ginger People Ginger Juice and Turmeric Juice

Ginger and turmeric are some of the most powerful spices for fighting inflammation, boosting immunity, reducing nausea, supporting heart health and relieving joint pain.

Ginger People Ginger and Turmeric juices contain no concentrates, instead you get 99% pure juice extracted through a proprietary juicing process to retain the spice's valuable properties.

Each 8-ounce glass bottle has 10-20 shots for you to flavor your water, tea, and smoothies or to use in place of fresh turmeric and ginger in recipes. Of course, you can also drink them straight as a daily wellness shot.

Both found in Heinen's Juice Aisle.

Algae Cooking Club Algae Oil

Just like olive and avocado oil, algae oil is a rich source of monounsaturated omega-9 fatty acids, making it a healthier alternative to animal fats. Omega-9s have several health benefits, including anti-inflammatory and support for cancer prevention.

Algae Cooking Club Algae Oil has an ultra-high 535°F smoke point, and is safe for searing, stir-frying, baking and salad dressings.

You can find this amazing oil right next to the other cooking oils in Heinen's Grocery Department in Original, Chili-infused and Shiitake mushroom-infused varieties.



EASY BANANA OAT CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

The following recipe was written by Heinen's Chief Dietitian, Melanie Jatsek RD, LD, and photographed by Ashley Durand of Plate & Pen.



Nutrition Information

Serving size: 1 cookie; Calories: 180; Carbohydrates: 26 grams; Protein: 4 grams; Total fat: 7 grams; Saturated fat: 3 grams; Fiber: 4 grams; Added sugar: 3 grams; Sodium: 4 mg; Potassium: 317 mg

Note: Nutrition information does not include add-ins and is provided as an estimate only.

Prep time: 10 minutes; Cook time: 15 minutes; Servings: 10

It's hard to believe that two simple whole food ingredients—bananas and oats—could form such a delicious and nutritious cookie! This base recipe is wonderful as is, but don't be afraid to experiment with some of the optional add-ins.

Ingredients

- 3 large bananas (must be ripe)
- 1.5 cups of One Degree Sprouted Rolled Oats
- 1/2 cup Hu Dark Chocolate Chips
- 1/3 cup of Add Ins (see below), optional

Instructions

1. Set oven to 350F. Line a baking tray with parchment paper.
2. Mash bananas in a large mixing bowl.
3. Add in oats, folding in the chocolate chips and add ins of your choice. Softly mix.
4. Use an ice cream scoop to pack the cookie batter, placing them on the lined baking tray. I use a drinking glass to press down each pile to make even-sized cookies. These cookies do not spread when baking.
5. Bake for 12-14 minutes. Add an extra 1-2 minutes if you've mixed in additional ingredients like coconut or walnuts for example. Make sure to watch in case they over-brown.

Add-In Suggestions

- Unsalted chopped nuts (walnuts, pecans, almonds, etc.)
- Unsalted seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, hemp, chia)
- Let's Do Organic Shredded Coconut
- Dried Fruit; diced
- Tosi Snack Bars (crushed into pieces)
- 1/2 tsp. Heinen's Ground Cinnamon
- A dash of vanilla extract



Club Fx is a FREE program for Heinen's Tasteful Rewards members that offers education, nutrition tips, product recommendations and recipe inspiration for customers to live their healthiest lives. Interested in becoming a Club Fx member? Update your Tasteful Rewards account to ensure you get our weekly emails and access to personalized nutrition services!