

# PRO-INFLAMMATORY FOODS

## FOODS THAT MAY CAUSE INFLAMMATION



### Ultra-processed foods

Ultra-processed foods are foods that are made with ingredients that you wouldn't find in your kitchen or be able to buy from a supermarket. Examples of ingredients that can tell you that a food is ultra-processed are flavourings, colourings, emulsifiers, sweeteners and stabilisers.

These foods are usually pre-packaged in plastic, are ready to eat or cook, and have a long shelf life so they can stay in your cupboard or fridge for a long time.

A diet with a lot of ultra-processed foods in is linked to weight gain and poor health, both of which can contribute to or worsen pain.

The lists below show ultra-processed foods on the left and their less processed, healthier swaps on the right.

#### Ultra-processed

Breakfast cereals  
Flavoured yoghurts  
Crisps, biscuits, cakes

Supermarket bread  
Chocolate spread  
Ready meals  
Fast food, e.g. burgers

#### Less processed

Porridge oats  
Plain yoghurt with honey  
Whole fruit, veg sticks, nuts/seeds  
Home/bakery made bread  
Peanut butter  
Homemade meals  
Home made burgers

#### Other actions you can take:

- Cook at home from scratch as often as you can
- Snack on whole foods, rather than pre-packaged snacks
- Reduce the number of fast foods / takeaways you eat
- Check food labels for saturated fat, salt and sugar quantity
- Make a packed lunch if you know you'll be out for the day



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|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Red and processed meat</b>      | Red and processed meat are linked to many health conditions which can contribute to or worsen persistent pain. They are high in saturated fats and many contain preservatives which can be bad for our health. Red meat should be eaten in moderation (1-2 x a week) and processed meats avoided as much as possible.                                  | Examples of red meats are beef, lamb, mutton, pork, veal, venison. Examples of processed meats are sausages, burgers, bacon, ham, tinned corned beef and luncheon meat. Pre-packaged lunch meats, including turkey and chicken. Pates and deli meats, like salami.   |
| <b>Quick release carbohydrates</b> | Quick release carbohydrates are sugary or starchy foods which have been processed, which removes lots of their fibre and nutritional content. Eating lots of quick release carbohydrates can contribute to or worsen inflammation.<br>Try to eat less quick release carbohydrates and more slow release carbohydrates, and you will feel the benefits. | Examples of quick release carbohydrates are white bread, rice and pasta, processed breakfast cereals, biscuits, crisps, sugary drinks, pasties and cakes.<br><br>Examples of slow release carbohydrates are wholegrain bread, baked and sweet potatoes, beans, peas, lentils, root vegetables, green leafy vegetables. |



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|  |   |   |
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| <b>Sugar and artificially sweetened drinks</b> | Drinks that have added sugar or artificial sweeteners are linked to increased inflammation and higher sensitivity to pain in some people.   | Examples of sugar/sweetened drinks are energy drinks, fizzy drinks, hot chocolate, lassi and iced and flavoured coffees.  |
| <b>Alcoholic drinks</b>                        | Alcohol causes both short-term and long-term inflammation. Alcohol does not decrease pain, instead it depresses the central nervous system giving some people short-term relief but potentially worsening pain as an after affect. Because our bodies see alcohol as a poison, it will delay other processes (such as growth and repair) while it rids the body of what it sees to be a threat. | Examples of alcoholic drinks are lager, ales/beer, wine, cider, prosecco, spirits and alcopops.<br><br>One unit of alcohol equals 10ml or 8g of pure alcohol, which is around the amount of alcohol the average adult can process in an hour. There is no safe level of alcohol consumption, but advice is not to exceed 14 units per week across 3 days or more. |
| <b>Unhealthy fats</b>                          | We should try to reduce and limit the amount of saturated fats in our diet as these have been linked to causing an inflammatory response and inflammation, both of which may worsen pain.   | Examples of where you find saturated fats are, red meats, dairy products like whole milk, butter and cream. Cheese, coconut oil/fats and milk.  |



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# ANTI-INFLAMMATORY FOODS

## FOODS THAT MAY PREVENT OR REDUCE INFLAMMATION



|                        |   |   |
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| <b>Fermented foods</b> | <p>Our digestive tract is full of microorganisms. This community of microorganisms is called our gut microbiome. Fermented foods can supply a dose of healthy probiotics which helps to create a healthy gut microbiome. A healthy microbiome supports good digestion, helps our immune system to function properly, and can reduce inflammation.</p> | <p>Examples of fermented foods are Greek and natural yoghurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut, olives, pickles, sourdough, Miso, Tempeh, Dosa. Soft and hard cheese like cheddar, feta, cottage and Edam.</p>   |
| <b>Fibre</b>           | <p>High-fibre diets have been shown to reduce inflammation and are very important to supporting a healthy gut microbiome, known to regulate our immune system and inflammatory responses.</p> <p>Plants and homemade plant-based meals generally contain lots of fibre.</p>   | <p>Foods that are high in fibre are: whole fruit, vegetables, skin on potatoes, beans, peas, lentils, unsalted nuts, seeds, wholegrain bread and wholewheat pasta.</p> <p>Higher-fibre breakfast cereals include Weetabix, shredded wheat and porridge oats. Choose plain versions without added sugar.</p> |



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| <b>Polyphenols</b>   | <p>There are lots of different types of antioxidants, a powerful type of antioxidant are called polyphenols (polly-fee-nols). Most plants contain polyphenols and therefore it is important to eat a wide variety of different plants in your diet.</p> <p>Fruit and vegetables contain high levels of micro-nutrients, including antioxidants, vitamins and minerals.</p> | <p>Foods rich in polyphenols are colourful fruits (e.g. apples, berries, grapes, peaches, apricots) and vegetables (e.g. spinach, red onions, broccoli). The skin of fruits and vegetables can have higher amounts). Black tea, green tea, coffee, dark chocolate, seeds, nuts and wholegrains (e.g. breads, brown rice and wholegrain cereals, like bran).</p> |
| <b>Free Radicals</b> | <p>When you have too many free radicals and not enough antioxidants, your body has something called oxidative stress. This type of stress causes damage to cells of the body and can contribute to or worsen painful conditions or experience of pain.</p>   | <p>Examples of foods high in antioxidants include blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, red cabbage, beetroot, spinach, broccoli, carrots, avocados. To get plenty of antioxidants into your diet try to eat a rainbow of fruit and vegetables.</p>   |



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| <b>Antioxidants</b>   | Antioxidants are types of plant molecules that are able to stop harmful chemicals called free radicals and reduce cell damage.   | Vitamins like C and E and minerals like copper and zinc are antioxidants. Foods that contain lots of antioxidants are brightly coloured and flavourful plants.  |
| <b>Healthier fats</b> | Fat is important to the normal maintenance and function of the body, including being a source of energy. Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats may have a role in reducing inflammation. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (sometimes called 'good fats') are useful when eaten in moderation.<br><br>Omega 3 fats have been shown to dampen general inflammation and may help to reduce joint pain and stiffness. | Examples of foods that contain 'good fats' are olive oil, oily fish e.g. salmon, mackerel, sardines, anchovies. Nuts, seeds, avocados. Olive oil is a monounsaturated fat recommended as part of an anti-inflammatory diet, and is featured as a key part of the 'Mediterranean diet'.<br><br>Examples of ways to include Omega-3 fats in your diet are oily fish, nuts, seeds and nutritional supplements. |



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