

NUTRITION

Diet is a critical factor in managing any long-term condition, but until more conclusive research comes out, it can be tough to find specific advice in relation to pain. While there's no such thing as a cure-all diet for pain, this means we can take an individualized approach to nutrition for pain management and that's good news! Below are some practical tips for eating well when living with pain.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

In a nutshell, Canada's food guide says to:

- Have plenty of vegetables and fruits (visually: half your plate)
- Eat protein foods (visually: a quarter of your plate)
- Choose whole-grain foods (visually: a quarter of your plate)
- Make water your drink of choice
- Its website (www.Canada.ca/FoodGuide/) has loads of recipes but its real message is that it's not WHAT you eat, it's HOW you eat

FOOD HACKS: COOK SMARTER, NOT HARDER!

Preparing food when experiencing pain, fatigue or low mood makes it more difficult to eat well. When it comes to cooking, it's important not to let these feelings overwhelm you.

- If your symptoms are too much, don't be afraid to use 'ready meals'. There are plenty of nutritious ones available, just try and avoid those high in sugar, salt and fat.
- Don't overlook the benefits of frozen, dried and canned fruits and vegetables.
- Try to make things easy for yourself and make use of online grocery deliveries.

SHOP BEFORE THE STORM HITS: PREPARING FOR FLARE-UP TIMES

- Trying to prepare healthy food can be difficult at the best of times so when a flare-up occurs, it's good to have entire meal plans ready that are quick and easy.
- Harriet Smith, Registered Dietitian who lives with chronic pain recommends:
 - Baked beans, wholemeal toast, grated cheese
 - Pre-cooked packets of rice with a fillet of fish/meat/tofu and a can of ratatouille
 - A slice of quiche, salad, baked potato

- Breaded fish/fish cake/pre-cooked fillet of fish with new potatoes (or ready cooked mashed potato) and frozen/canned veg
- Pasta, jar of tomato-based sauce (check the food label for low salt and sugar versions), mix in tinned tuna
- Cheese on toast with sliced tomato
- Soup with bread roll, cheese and side salad
- Couscous (made in minutes with boiling water) with frozen roasted vegetables and feta/halloumi
- Bowl of wholegrain breakfast cereal (or porridge) with milk and two handfuls of fruit

ORGANIC FOODS: ARE THEY HEALTHIER?

- Organic foods aren't necessarily healthier. While they are cleaner — they don't have the residue of pesticides – the nutritional value is the same.
- [This website](#) lists the fruits and vegetables that are most easily cleaned of harmful residue.

RESOURCES

- [LivePlanBe article: The link between diet and pain](#)
- [How to eat well with a chronic illness](#)
- [Canada's food guide](#)