

News Release From:  
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### **Eat Well for Arthritis Relief**

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When the weather changes, many people can ‘feel it in their bones.’ In fact, around 50 million people in the United States are affected by arthritis, whose inflammation and joint stiffness can cause great discomfort. But eating a healthy diet can help alleviate some of that pain.

In this case, eating well means getting enough Vitamin C, Vitamin D, Beta-carotene (the precursor to Vitamin A), Vitamin E, and last but not least, water. These nutrients can slow the progression of arthritis. Vitamins C and E and beta-carotene are antioxidants. As such, they help control the free-radical oxygen compounds. Dr. Miriam Nelson, director at Tufts University’s John Hancock Center on Physical Activity, Nutrition and Obesity, says these free radicals, “can rip through cartilage like bullets, damaging its structure. As damage occurs, there’s inflammation at the joint, and inflammation is involved in osteoarthritis, too.” The water is needed to get the nutrients distributed throughout the body, keep the cells hydrated and remove waste.

Nelson recommends getting adequate amounts of these nutrients by choosing foods carefully. For example, 9,000 IU of beta-carotene is the level needed to be of benefit to someone with arthritis. A medium sweet potato provides more than 18,000 IU. A cup of sliced carrots provides over 20,000 IU. For Vitamin C, the recommendation is at least 200 mg per day, about the amount in two oranges or a cup of sliced strawberries. Nelson also recommends drinking at least eight eight-ounce cups of liquid daily, with water being the healthiest choice.

Other nutrients that may help slow the progression of arthritis are Vitamin K (found in dark greens, broccoli, and asparagus); and omega-3 (found in fish, nuts and flaxseed), and omega-9 fatty acids (found in canola, soybean and olive oils). These healthier fat choices should be consumed in moderation though.

Reducing the pain and stiffness of arthritis starts with a great eating plan: get plenty of water every day, and eat well by enjoying healthy choices, choosing the brilliant colors of fresh, frozen, canned and dried vegetables and fruits; whole grains; fish, nuts, soy and legumes; small amounts of meat, poultry or eggs; and low-fat milk, cheese and yogurt. And of course add strengthening exercises for a more comfortable life with arthritis.

For more information on eating well for arthritis relief, or any other topic, contact me, Janet Hackert, Regional Nutrition Specialist, at 660-425-6434 or [HackertJ@missouri.edu](mailto:HackertJ@missouri.edu) or your local University of Missouri Extension office.