

There are many books and resources available that offer more detailed information about nutrition and pain. Dr. Andrew Weil has several books on healthy eating and the impact of food on pain and disease. One of his books Eating Well for Optimum Health, will give more details about healthy eating. There are recipes included as well. Berry Sears writes about the anti-inflammatory zone in his book, Enter the Zone. The internet is a great place to research and learn more. For good information on the New Food Pyramid enter "the new food pyramid", click on the Harvard School of Public Health web site. For more information on nutrition and pain, enter "nutrition and pain", click on National Fibromyalgia Association website and/or Virtual pain centre site.

TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING

- Eat a variety of foods. Carbohydrates, proteins and fats are important to include in your diet.
- Avoid animal fats and foods high in cholesterol. If you must, eat lean meat without fat, no bigger in portion than the palm of your hand--1/3rd of your plate.
- Eat more fish and poultry.
- Increase leafy green vegetables and high colored fruits in your diet--2/3rds of your plate should be filled with these items.
- Avoid simple sugars and simple carbohydrates such as cakes, cookies, pies, candy, ice cream and soft drinks.
- Increase carbohydrates such as whole grain breads, high fiber cereals and pastas, brown rice and oats.
- Eliminate or reduce caffeine (coffee, tea, colas, chocolate).



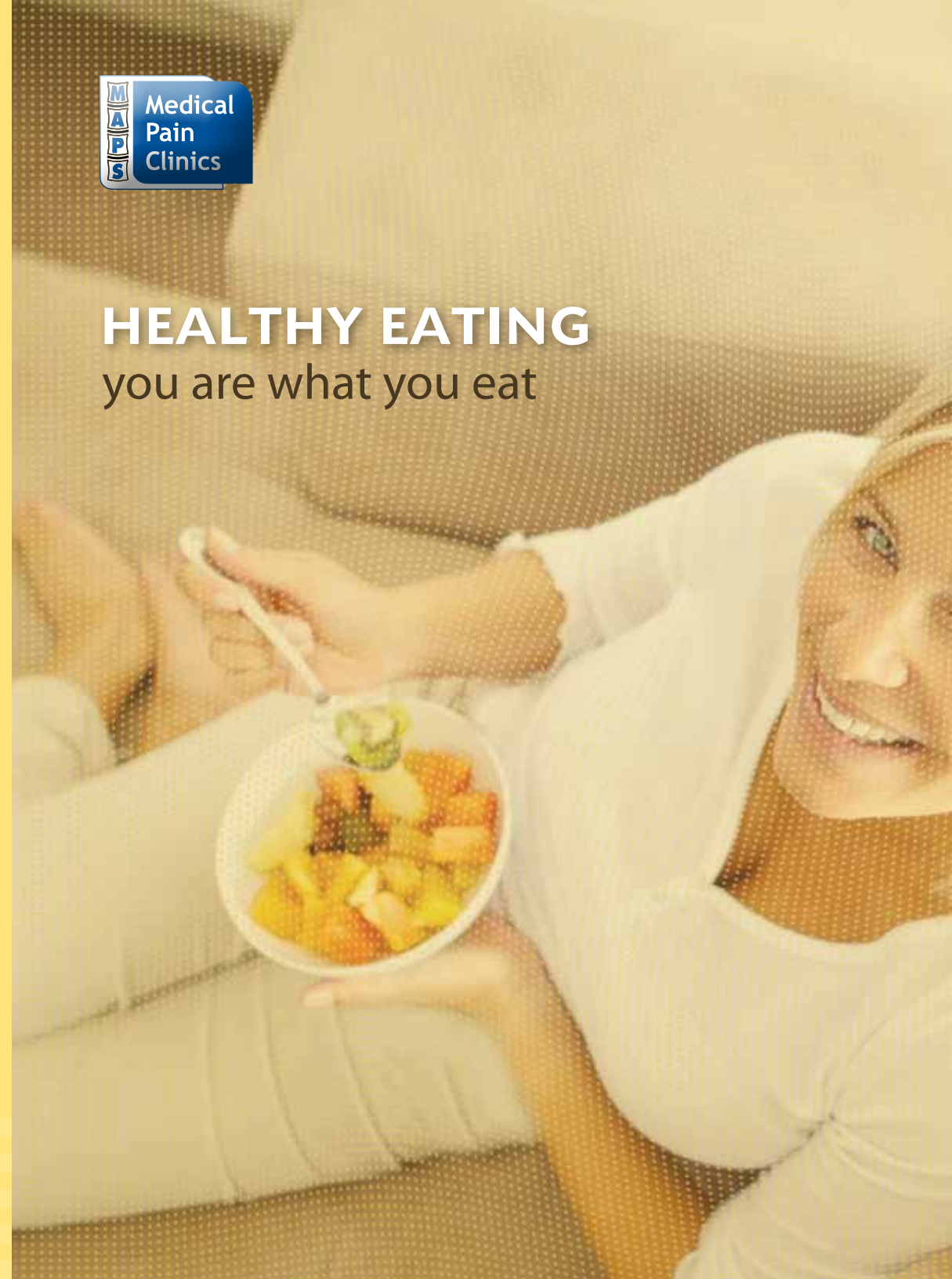
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LIVING HEALTHY WITH CHRONIC PAIN



HEALTHY EATING

you are what you eat



PAIN AND YOUR DIET

By Diane Budnick, CNP

There is a connection between nutrition and pain. What we eat affects health, disease and the growth and repair of our body. As the saying goes, we are what we eat.

There are three elements in our foods; carbohydrates, protein and fat. When we digest food we are supplied with energy. This process is similar to putting gas in a car and the car running. Most of the energy produced is from fat and carbohydrates. A smaller portion of energy comes from protein. Protein is for building and repairing the body. A healthy diet includes all three elements.

Carbohydrates are primarily in foods such as fruits, vegetables, grains, sugars and starches. They are digested easily and provide us with quick energy. Proteins are in meat, fish, poultry and eggs. Fats are in foods such as butter, oils, nuts, olives and avocado. Fats take longer to digest and give us stored energy. They also make foods taste good.

The New Food Pyramid outlines the current thinking about how Americans should eat. The primary component of the pyramid is daily exercise and weight control. Next are whole grains, including cereal, rice and pasta. The next category is vegetables and 100% vegetable juices. Fruits follow, with fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits included in this category. Oils are the next category in The New Food Pyramid. Fish, nuts and vegetable oils are sources of good oils. Calcium rich foods such as milk, cheese and yogurt fall into the "milk" category. Finally, the meats and beans category include lean meats and poultry as well as suggestions of the best methods to prepare these foods. The New Food Pyramid can be found at www.mypyramid.gov. My Pyramid is a great resource to help plan and assess your food choices based on the dietary guidelines for Americans.

If "medicine is our food and food is our medicine," what we eat should help reduce pain if we are eating the right kinds of foods. Some foods have been found to be anti-inflammatory (reduces inflammation) when included in our diet over time thus reducing pain. There are also foods that can cause or contribute to inflammation, thereby increasing pain. Studies have been done with

groups of people suffering with chronic pain such as rheumatoid arthritis. People in these studies ate a diet with anti-inflammatory foods for six months. At the end of the study these people had lower pain levels and used less pain medication.

So, what foods should be included in a diet that that is considered anti-inflammatory in nature? Salmon, mackerel, sardines, albacore tuna and halibut are examples of foods that are considered anti-inflammatory. Highly colored fruits and vegetables also fall into this category. Examples of these are; blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, blackberries, spinach, broccoli and green beans. Foods high in Omega 3 fatty acids are also considered to be anti-inflammatory. Walnuts, olives, olive oil and avocado are plant sources of Omega 3. High fiber foods such as whole grains, oatmeal and brown rice are recommended. There are herbs and spices that are also anti-inflammatory; ginger, thyme, rosemary, turmeric, garlic and green tea.

On the flip side, there are also foods that you should avoid because they have been found to increase inflammation. Some of these are; potatoes, peppers, eggplant, tomatoes and citrus. Decreasing dairy, meat and animal fats have proven to reduce inflammation. Caffeine, alcohol, tobacco and simple sugars should all be avoided because they can also contribute to chronic pain.

For those who suffer from migraine headaches, it is important to be aware that certain foods can "trigger" or start a headache. Common triggers are; chocolate, red wine, strong flavored cheeses, fermented foods, sardines, anchovies, pickled herring, cured meats, and caffeine sources. Reducing or eliminating the triggers may help prevent migraine headaches. There are studies that show headache improvement with the use of Riboflavin 400mg/day and Magnesium 300mg/day. Before taking any supplements, a provider should be consulted.

An article about nutrition cannot be complete unless there are a few sentences about weight. When carrying excessive weight, there are more stresses on the muscles and joints. Newer information about nutrition uses the "glycemic index" of carbohydrates. This process is the speed that certain carbohydrates are digested, converted by our body to glucose (our energy source) and increases our levels of insulin (substance produced by our pancreas). Foods that have a high glycemic index such as simple sugars are digested quickly, raise blood sugar and cause a strain on the pancreas to produce more insulin. This can promote weight gain. If suggestions made earlier in this article are followed, weight loss could also follow. A reduction of even as little as ten pounds can have a real impact on pain, energy, mood and sleep. It is important to consume enough calories necessary to sustain life plus carry you through exercise for the day. Not too many, though. Too many calories=weight gain. Fewer calories than needed=weight loss. Don't forget exercise as an important part of a daily routine. Walking 10 minutes three times per day doesn't stress the "sore parts" but helps with strengthening support muscles and can lead to weight loss.

