

NUTRITION

Hunter Integrated Pain Service



KEY MESSAGES

1. Eat a rainbow of fruit (2 serves) and vegetables (5 serves) per day
2. Eat good quality fats (omega-3 and olive oils)
3. Choose water as your main drink
4. Choose wholemeal & wholegrain breads, cereals and grains
5. Include high quality protein
6. Reduce ultra-processed foods and added sugar

The science

Improving your eating patterns can:

1. Enhance the function of nerves and the immune system leading to less pain
2. Reduce other chronic diseases that impact on pain experiences (e.g. cardiovascular disease and poor mental health)
3. Improve your overall health and energy levels which can improve your function and quality of life



Why?

Optimising eating patterns will reduce inflammation in the body which will help to reduce pain experiences

1. Fruit and vegetables contain important compounds (polyphenols) which protect the body from stress and reduce inflammation
2. Omega-3 and olive oils reduce inflammation and protect the immune system
3. Dehydration can increase sensitivity to pain so choosing water will help to prevent this. If you have a medical condition which impacts on your fluid intake, speak with your GP first.
4. Fibre is important for proper digestion and maintenance of a healthy gut bacteria.
5. Protein from lean meats (100g), eggs (2), nuts, seeds (30g) and lentils (1 cup) are important for muscle growth and strength.
6. Ultra processed foods (e.g. chips, processed meats and take away foods) and added sugar (e.g. soft drinks) wind up the nervous system and inflammation processes in the body.

How?

Pain can make shopping and cooking difficult. Try some of these easy tips:

1. Use a variety of frozen mixed vegetables in a stir-fry or casserole
2. Use reduced salt canned vegetables e.g. tomatoes & mixed beans in stews and pastas
3. Fill a large water bottle every day and aim to finish it by the end of the day
4. Replace soft drinks with sparkling water and fruit like lemon or strawberries
5. Choose fruit, pre-cut veggie sticks and hummus from the supermarket or reduced-fat yoghurt as snacks
6. Microwave meals or ready made soups with a bag of steam fresh vegetables or baby spinach leaves are a great alternative to take away if you are having a flare-up. Choose meals with:
 - Approximately 1700kJ per serve
 - Less than 2g saturated fat per serve
 - Less than 400mg sodium per 100g.

OTHER LINKS

- **Healthy Eating Quiz:** <https://healthyeatingquiz.com.au/>
- **No Money No Time:** <https://nomoneynotime.com.au/>
- **ACI network - Pain: Lifestyle & Nutrition:** <https://www.aci.health.nsw.gov.au/chronic-pain/for-everyone/pain-lifestyle-and-nutrition>
- **Eat for Health (Nutrition Guidelines):** https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines/australian-guide-healthy-eating_
- **Australian Healthy Food Guide:** <https://www.healthyfoodguide.com.au/>

