

How a plant-based diet can ease rheumatoid arthritis

October 1 2019, by Nancy Clanton



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Switching to a plant-based diet can alleviate the pain caused by rheumatoid arthritis, a new study shows.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a type of inflammatory polyarthritis, characterized by inflammation in more than four joints.

Rheumatoid arthritis occurs when your [immune system](#) attacks the synovium—the lining of the membranes that surround your joints, the Mayo Clinic states on its website. The resulting inflammation thickens the synovium, which can eventually destroy the cartilage and bone within the joint.

Although RA can occur at any age, it usually begins in middle age. It also affects woman more often than men.

A study published in Frontiers in Nutrition suggests eliminating red meat from their diet can help ease RA pain.

Researchers with the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences reviewed "[clinical trials](#) and [observational studies](#) and found strong and consistent evidence that a plant-based dietary pattern can reduce inflammation and improve symptoms associated with RA."

"A plant-based diet comprised of fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes may be tremendously helpful for those with rheumatoid arthritis," study co-author Hana Kahleova, director of clinical research for the Physicians Committee, said in a press release. "This study offers hope that with a simple menu change, [joint pain](#), swelling, and other painful symptoms may improve or even disappear."

The researchers' review of a several studies found that plant-based diets reduce inflammation. One of these studies found that "diets high in fat and processed meat are associated with inflammatory markers, including C-reactive protein (CRP). Plant-based diets and high-fiber diets have been associated with lower CRP levels."

A review of a clinical trial found that people with moderate to severe [rheumatoid arthritis](#) experienced significant improvements in morning stiffness, RA pain, joint tenderness, and joint swelling after just four weeks on a low-fat vegan diet.

"This study offers hope that with a simple menu change, joint pain, swelling, and other painful symptoms may improve or even disappear," Kahleova said.

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Citation: How a plant-based diet can ease rheumatoid arthritis (2019, October 1) retrieved 30 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-10-plant-based-diet-ease-rheumatoid-arthritis.html>

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