

# Fact Sheet

## Nutrition

### Parkinson's Disease & Movement Disorders Center

Maintaining a healthy diet and weight is the cornerstone of wellness. Failing to eat properly negatively affects our energy, mood, libido, and sleep, and has overarching implications for other problems such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. In general, most people are aware of the importance of eating a variety of foods from different food groups, and that eating in moderation is prudent to maintain a healthy weight. There are additional factors particularly important to the PD population.

#### *Vitamin D / Calcium*

Bone health is a significant issue in PD because of the risk of bone fractures associated with falling. It is important to prevent bone loss by ensuring your diet contains adequate amounts of calcium and vitamin D (either through certain foods like milk, yogurt, and fish, or through dietary supplements), increasing your exposure to sunlight, and performing weight-bearing exercises. Your primary care doctor can recommend a bone-density check.

#### *"Inflammatory" Foods & Antioxidants*

Inflammation is the result of damage to tissue that results from the body's response to certain stimuli which it perceives as harmful. Inflammation is at least partly involved in many common chronic disease states including arthritis, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancers, and autoimmune diseases. There is evidence that inflammation may play a role in the development of PD as well. Furthermore, certain foods seem to promote inflammation in certain tissues of the body more than others. These "pro-inflammatory" foods include: red meat, high-fat dairy products, partially hydrogenated oils, and simple carbohydrates (e.g., bagels, rice, pasta, and sweets). There is no evidence directly linking these foods to PD, nor is there clear evidence that avoiding these foods is protective – the proposed association is theoretical. Nevertheless, most nutritionists would argue that everyone should avoid these "pro-inflammatory" foods as much as possible.

Antioxidants are substances that neutralize unstable molecules that float around damaging tissues or cells. Like inflammation, oxidative damage is theorized to be partly responsible for the development of PD. A diet high in these products may be beneficial in PD. One such diet, the "Mediterranean Diet," includes many foods that have beneficial anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties such as: olive oil, fruits and vegetables (particularly green leafy vegetables, colorful berries, nuts and seeds rich in vitamin E), fish (e.g., salmon and tuna), and red wine (taken in moderation). In recent years, considerable interest has turned to supplements which have antioxidant properties – the most noteworthy of which includes Coenzyme Q10, creatine, and vitamin E. Unfortunately, these studies have mostly produced disappointing results. While these supplements appear to be safe, there is not enough evidence to suggest that they play any significant role in the disease. Green tea, turmeric, cinnamon, and garlic also have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, although no evidence-based recommendations can be made about them due to the limited data we have.

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