HEALTHY EATING FOR PARKINSON’S
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGING SYMPTOMS
The Brian Grant Foundation provides tools to improve the well-being of people with Parkinson’s. Our programs focus on exercise and nutrition to help people with Parkinson’s manage their symptoms, improve their overall health and prevent other serious illnesses.

Every month, we publish an email newsletter filled with tips, expert interviews, profiles of people with Parkinson’s and more.

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HEALTHY EATING FOR PARKINSON’S

NUTRITION FOR PARKINSON’S OVERVIEW

A nutritious diet is important for maintaining good health and preventing chronic illnesses. For people with Parkinson’s, nutritious foods can also help manage some of the common symptoms of the disease and support healthy brain functions. Whether you’re making a meal at home, or eating out with friends, our nutrition recommendations can help guide you to create your own healthy diet.

A WORD ON PARKINSON’S NUTRITION RESEARCH

Many studies have examined how specific nutrients affect brain cells when tested on animal models with Parkinson’s-like symptoms in the laboratory. Other research has explored how different foods increase or decrease a person’s risk of developing the disease. Although this information provides important clues about nutrition and Parkinson’s, there is limited research on whether certain foods might improve or worsen the disease once a person is diagnosed.

While more evidence on the effects of diet on the progression of Parkinson’s disease is needed, it’s still important to educate yourself on the benefits of a healthy diet to manage symptoms and improve your overall health. This document is a good place to start learning more about nutrition.

MEDICATION INTERACTIONS

Before you start making changes to your diet, you should know that protein could interfere with the uptake of levodopa. For people taking levodopa to manage symptoms, protein shouldn’t be eaten 30 minutes before or one hour after taking these medications. Sinemet and Parcopa are commonly used levodopa medications. Talk with your doctor if you’re unsure whether protein may interfere with your medications.

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DIETARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARKINSON’S

Plant-based, whole food diets are healthy for everyone. For people with Parkinson’s, loading up on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds can help manage symptoms and support a healthy lifestyle. Research suggests that the staples of a Mediterranean diet – which also includes fish and olive oil – may have particular benefits for people with Parkinson’s. These foods, listed in the table below under the “more is better” column, can be incorporated into just about any cuisine.

Table 1. Dietary recommendations for Parkinson’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MORE IS BETTER</th>
<th>TRY TO LIMIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh and frozen vegetables</td>
<td>Soda, diet soda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh and frozen fruits</td>
<td>Meat and animal fats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish (not fried!)</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts and seeds</td>
<td>Fried foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olive oil</td>
<td>Processed foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconut oil</td>
<td>Refined grains (white flour, white rice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh herbs and spices</td>
<td>Sugar, high fructose corn syrup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legumes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole grains</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MORE IS BETTER: TIPS AND EXAMPLES

Choose a variety of foods from the “More Is Better” category to get a good balance of nutrients in your diet. Table 2 on the next page provides tips and examples for choosing foods that can support a healthy lifestyle with Parkinson’s. This information is adapted from BGF Medical Advisor Dr. Duda’s “Wellness prescription for people with Parkinson’s disease.”

To read an interview with Dr. Duda about getting more of the right foods in your diet, visit our blog online. You’ll find nutrition tips, interviews with experts, recipes and more!

www.briangrant.org/blog
Table 2. More is better tips and examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MORE IS BETTER</th>
<th>TIPS</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh and frozen</td>
<td>Choose a variety of colorful vegetables:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vegetables</td>
<td>▪ Dark leafy greens</td>
<td>▪ Spinach, romaine lettuce, kale, arugula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Cruciferous vegetables</td>
<td>▪ Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Nightshade vegetables</td>
<td>▪ Tomatoes, peppers, eggplant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Mushrooms</td>
<td>▪ Mushrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh and frozen</td>
<td>Choose a variety of colorful fruits:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fruits</td>
<td>▪ Berries</td>
<td>▪ Blueberries, cherries, goji berries, cranberries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Stone fruits</td>
<td>▪ Plums, apricots, peaches, nectarines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Dried fruits</td>
<td>▪ Prunes, dried apricots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Pears, oranges, watermelon, bananas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish (not fried!)</td>
<td>Choose fishes that are high in Omega-3 fatty acids and low in mercury.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Pacific wild caught salmon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Mackerel, anchovies, sardines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts and seeds</td>
<td>Eat a variety of nuts and seeds. Add 1-2 tablespoons of ground flax</td>
<td>▪ Almonds, walnuts, pistachios, cashews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to your diet as well.</td>
<td>▪ Pumpkin, sunflower, flax, chia and hemp seeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olive oil</td>
<td>Use in salad dressings, marinades, and some cooking. Can be used to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>roast or sauté vegetables.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconut oil</td>
<td>Use for some cooking and baking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh herbs and</td>
<td>Choose a variety of fresh herbs and spices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spices</td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Turmeric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Nutmeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Oregano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Cinnamon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Cilantro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legumes</td>
<td>Legumes include beans, lentils, and soy.</td>
<td>▪ Kidney, black, garbanzo, fava, and navy beans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Green, brown, and red lentils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Tofu, miso, edamame, tempeh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole grains</td>
<td>Whole grains include the entire grain kernel, which contains dietary</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fiber and other nutrients.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Oatmeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Farro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Brown rice</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Quinoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Buckwheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Bulgur wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Barley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Spelt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>Tea served alone (without added milk or sugar) contains a variety of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nutrients. Try drinking 1-3 cups daily.</td>
<td>▪ Green tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ White tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Black tea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANTIOXIDANTS

You may have heard of beneficial nutrients called antioxidants, which help to reduce damage to cells in the body that are caused by free radicals. There is some evidence that suggests antioxidants can reduce the risk of Parkinson's and support healthy brain function. But antioxidants are an important nutrient for everyone and can be found in a variety of fruits and vegetables. Antioxidants include vitamin E, beta-carotene and flavonoids (especially a type of flavonoid called anthocyanins). Good sources of these antioxidants include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FLAVONOIDS</th>
<th>VITAMIN E</th>
<th>BETA-CAROTENE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leafy greens</td>
<td>Leafy greens</td>
<td>Leafy greens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berries</td>
<td>Broccoli</td>
<td>Broccoli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red cabbage</td>
<td>Butternut squash</td>
<td>Butternut squash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggplant</td>
<td>Red peppers</td>
<td>Red peppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radishes</td>
<td>Vegetable oils</td>
<td>Carrots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black beans</td>
<td>Asparagus</td>
<td>Peas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidney beans</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sweet potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple asparagus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red onions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plums</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomegranates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapes</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Sources of antioxidants

PESTICIDES

Certain pesticides and herbicides increase the risk of Parkinson's. Though it’s unclear whether pesticides and herbicides affect the progression of the disease once a person is diagnosed, it’s always a good idea to wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating them. You may also want to consider the Environmental Working Group’s Shoppers Guide to Pesticides in Produce, available at [www.ewg.org/foodnews/list](http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/list), which includes a list of produce that is lower in pesticides.
MANAGING PARKINSON’S SYMPTOMS

CONSTIPATION

Increasing your intake of fiber and fluids may help if you have constipation. Eating 30-40 grams of fiber daily, which is about one cup of legumes, may help with this symptom. Drinking 1-2 liters (6-8 glasses) of fluids can also help. Though the scientific evidence for the use of probiotics is limited, you can try to add non-dairy fermented foods or take a supplement to see if it helps. Examples of non-dairy fermented foods include sauerkraut, kimchi, pickled herring, or kombucha. Before you try a fiber supplement or laxative, be sure to speak to your doctor.

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

In the cases of weight loss and weight gain, there is likely an imbalance between how much you eat and how much energy you use. People experiencing weight loss may not be eating or absorbing enough calories. If you do not have an appetite or seem to be losing weight unintentionally, talk to your doctor about possible problems absorbing food, which is common in Parkinson’s. People experiencing weight gain are likely eating more calories than they burn through activities. A combination of eating less and moving more can help you lose weight.

CHEWING AND SWALLOWING

Problems with chewing and swallowing can lead to choking or breathing food and liquids into the lungs. Both of these conditions can be dangerous, but a speech therapist can help you focus on safe swallowing. Additionally, choosing foods that are easier to chew and swallow can help. The table below, from Parkinson-Net’s Dietetic Guideline for Parkinson's Disease, provides some guidelines to help you make decisions about what to safely eat.

Table 4. Guidelines for safely eating with chewing and swallowing problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROBLEM</th>
<th>CONSISTENCY</th>
<th>TRY TO AVOID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty chewing</td>
<td>Soft and grinded food</td>
<td>Tough and hard food, tough meat; hard fruits, crust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty manipulating food in the mouth</td>
<td>Soft food</td>
<td>Hard, granular or crumbly food; thin liquids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too little saliva</td>
<td>Soft and liquid food; more use of fluids during meals</td>
<td>Dry food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily choking on liquids</td>
<td>Thick liquids; thickening of thin liquids</td>
<td>Thin liquids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty swallowing</td>
<td>Liquid and soft food</td>
<td>Tough and hard food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ONLINE RESOURCES

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