Nutrition and Neuropathy

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Are There Links between Neuropathy and Diet?

The links between nutrition and neuropathic pain are well-established. First, doctors have identified dietary and nutritional deficiencies which can lead to neuropathy. Second, researchers have uncovered links between certain foods and improvements in neuropathic pain. So, is there a link between neuropathy and diet?

It is also worth noting that diabetic neuropathy, which is characterized by foot pain and other abnormalities, occurs in people with Type 2 diabetes or “adult-onset” diabetes. Diet plays a major role in the development of Type 2 diabetes; people who eat high amounts of sugar and fat, take in excessive amounts of calories, and are overweight or obese are at increased risk for developing this disease.

Nutrition and the Development of Neuropathy

Peripheral neuropathy and related forms of neuropathic pain have been closely associated with deficiencies in vitamin B12. Millions of people in the United States are deficient in vitamin B12, not only because of an overall lack of dietary intake but also because certain diseases and health conditions interfere with the body’s ability to absorb vitamin B12. Anemia, autoimmune diseases, multiple sclerosis, gastritis, Crohn’s disease, HIV and pancreatic diseases all deplete the body’s ability to absorb vitamin B12.

Many vegetarians and vegans suffer from vitamin B12 deficiencies, as animal products are the only recognized dietary source of this nutrient. If you are vegan or vegetarian, it is strongly recommended that you take vitamin B12 supplements to prevent possible anemia and nerve damage.

You can increase your dietary intake of vitamin B12 by eating more:

- Red meat and fish.
- Dairy products.
- Poultry and eggs.

Nutrition and the Treatment of Neuropathy

Neuropathy cannot be cured by dietary interventions. However, eating a healthy, well-balanced diet has been clinically proven to reduce the severity of symptoms. It is recommended that you eat a diet high in vitamin B12 while following general healthy eating guidelines to ensure your body has the right nutrients in the right proportions.

Here is an overview of healthy eating guidelines:

- Adult women should aim for 1,800 to 2,000 calories per day.
- Adult men should eat 2,000 to 2,500 calories per day.

- Get 45 to 65 percent of your calories from carbohydrate sources, 10 to 30 percent of your calories from protein and 10 to 25 percent of your calories from fat.
- Remember that fat helps your body absorb vitamins; it is a vital part of a healthy diet.
- Eat 5 to 10 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.
- Limit saturated fat intake.
- Choose cold-water fish and lean meat more often.
- Limit sugary foods and empty calories.
- Limit or avoid alcohol consumption.

You should also remain as physically active as possible, as stimulating blood flow through aerobic exercise has been linked to reduced severity of neuropathic pain. First, though, be sure to check with your doctor before starting any type of diet or exercise program.