Nutritional Support for Chronic Pain Management

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Two Nutrients That Decrease Chronic Pain

The information in this article can change your life if you have chronic pain. It won't happen overnight, but if you give yourself two to three weeks to try these suggestions, you will most likely be pleasantly surprised.

The fact is that it's your nutritionist who has a few secrets about how to relieve your chronic pain; ones that your medical doctor doesn't have. These two secrets revolve around two nutrients – vitamin D and magnesium.

Increasing Vitamin D Decreases Body Aches and Pains

Millions of people worldwide have a vitamin D deficiency. This seems impossible when the mere act of sunlight shining on the skin is enough to create vitamin D in the body. However, studies have shown that many people do not absorb the sun's rays into their skin. For example, the elderly absorb significantly fewer rays than those who are half their age. Those who have kidney or liver disease do not absorb the rays, either.

Others have a problem absorbing vitamin D either from the sun or from food. Those who are obese need three times as much vitamin D as those who are at their ideal body weight. Even newborns and children can start early life with a deficit and end up becoming deficient in the vitamin for years. It's no wonder that kids get so many colds and flu in the winter since vitamin D is so important for immunity.

The main point here is that almost everything we believed about vitamin D in the past is not true. One thing we do know now is that a few of the major vitamin D deficiency symptoms include muscle pain throughout the entire body, weakness, joint pain, and chronic pain. This could include back and neck pain or pain in any of your joints.

How to Use Vitamin D to Affect Your Chronic Pain

We also know that a level of about 2000 IU per day is what is needed to maintain good levels of the vitamin, and that's only after the levels are exactly where they should be – between 55 and 65 ug/dl on a 0-100 ug/dl scale. If deficient, it takes a lot more to get into the normal zone – 10,000 IU per day for three months.

The best way to see if a vitamin D deficiency is contributing to your chronic pain is to get a blood test and see if you're deficient. Most doctors will run these tests for their patients with chronic illnesses. You could also take a supplement of 5000 IU per day for a few weeks – the amount well under replacement levels if you have a deficiency – and then see how you feel. Most people feel better but don't think that one week is going to be enough. Do follow up with a test, and get your levels professionally taken care of.

Increasing Magnesium Eliminates Inflammation

The other nutrient that matters a lot in those who have chronic pain is magnesium. This nutrient is notoriously low in most of the population. Here's a list of symptoms:

Magnesium Deficiency Symptoms

- Anxiety.
- Nausea.
- Constipation.
- Muscle spasm and weakness.
- Sleep disorders, including insomnia.
- Hard of hearing.
- Irritability and agitation.
- Restless legs.
- Seizures.
- Arrhythmias.
- High blood pressure.
- Depression.
- Inflammation in the body.

Many people with chronic pain have several of these symptoms, although they may not be attributable to magnesium deficiency. Foods high in magnesium include legumes, green leafy vegetables, blackstrap molasses, wheat bran, and whole grains. However, food is not enough because magnesium deficiency is easily acquired when the patient has irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis, kidney disease, celiac disease, or diabetes. High levels of stress also deplete the body of magnesium.

If you have advanced kidney disease or heart disease, always check with your doctor to see if taking a supplement of 400 mg of magnesium is recommended. If you don’t have either of these types of disorders, start with a supplement once daily. Taking more is not recommended unless a clinical nutritionist confirms that you need more. See how you feel after the one capsule a day, and monitor your body’s pain levels.

Give yourself at least a few weeks on these supplements before you declare that they don’t work. Take them with food and away from medications. Always leave 30 to 60 minutes between medications, vitamins or minerals. Waiting a few weeks to decide if they work is important because if your levels are exceptionally low, it may take that long before your body responds.

You can make a big difference in your levels of chronic pain, but you must take action.