# Could You Benefit From Meal Prep With RA?

by BRENDA VANTA

## Rheumatoid Arthritis and Meal Preparation

The link between diet and symptoms of RA had been studied for over four decades in research studies, yet very few talk about this, even nowadays. In addition to the treatment recommended by your doctor, pay attention to what you eat – it can make a difference on how your joints will feel.

### Food and Disease Activity Link

Some foods promote inflammation in the body, while others can decrease it. Your digestive tract may play a role in the development of rheumatic conditions – this theory is supported by the fact the stool analysis conducted in RA patients found that bacterial flora is altered (when compared with healthy individuals). It is also well known that the intestinal bacterial flora is affected by the diet. Therefore, changing the diet can have an effect on disease activity.

The association between dietary habits and symptoms of RA are well documented, and several dietary protocols had been studied. Based on a review of multiple research papers published in “Oxford Journals-Rheumatology” positive results (with improvement in symptoms) were recorded using the following diets: fasting followed by lacto vegetarian diet, fasting followed by vegan diet , eliminating food intolerances and allergies (including wheat and dairy), Mediterranean diet and other diets rich in omega 3 and antioxidants.

### Rheumatoid Arthritis and Meal Preparation Tips

It is a good idea to cook your food at home, rather than buy it already prepared. When preparing your meals, consider the following tips of an anti-inflammatory diet:

- While minerals from foods are usually preserved by cooking, many vitamins (i.e. B, C vitamins) are destroyed by heat. Add more fresh fruits and vegetables to your diet – they are loaded with vitamins and minerals with antioxidant properties. Research studies have found that a diet rich in antioxidants can reduce pain and inflammation in joints affected by RA.
- Consume healthy oils (i.e. olive oil), and few nuts and seeds (chia or flax seeds) every day - they contain omega 3 fatty acids, vitamin E and plenty of minerals

- A great source of omega 3 fatty acids is fish. Eat fish at least 2-3 days a week and prepare it in a healthy way: either cooked or boiled. Best fish is the fatty fish like mackerel, herring, and salmon. Based on research studies, increasing omega 3 fatty acids in your diet can decrease the production of pro-inflammatory cells such as tumour necrosis factor alpha (TNF-?) and some interleukins.
- Add more healthy fibers to your diet, as they had been found to reduce the amounts of C-reactive protein (CRP), a marker of inflammation. Fruits (especially strawberries, vegetables (fresh or frozen), nuts, whole grains and beans are great sources of fibers.
- Spice up your meals. Some spices have anti-inflammatory qualities and can help reduce the pain and

swelling of your joints. When you prepare your meals, add turmeric, ginger or chili peppers.

- Get tested for food allergies and intolerances – as many as 30% of RA sufferers appear to have troubles with certain foods. The most common foods that had been found to trigger symptom aggravations are citric fruits, dairy products, red meats, coffee, lentils, complex carbohydrates (from cookies and candies), saturated fats (red meats, processed and fried foods), and some grains (especially those containing gluten).