Foods That Can Aggravate Fibromyalgia Pain

Who would have thought that certain foods would aggravate your pain? But think about it. Your body is different now, both inside and out. So your body may very well react differently than it had in the past to certain alkaloids or chemicals. What are some things to look out for as potential pain-makers?

1) **Nightshades.** Nightshades are a family of foods consisting of potatoes, tomatoes, tomatillos, bell peppers, hot peppers, chili peppers, eggplants, pimentos, paprika, cayenne and tobacco sauce (and tobacco-chewed or smoked). Nightshades contain certain chemicals called alkaloids that can negatively affect nerve and muscle function, especially in people who are sensitive to these chemicals. Some people can get along fine when they limit these foods to one per day, or per meal, and never combining any two at one time. If you go to Adrienne Dellwo’s excellent website [www.chronicfatigue.about.com](http://www.chronicfatigue.about.com), and type “Nightshades” in the search box, you can find several articles on these foods and how they relate to Fibromyalgia and pain.

2) **Excess Sugar.** Sugar in its natural state, i.e. within fruits and vegetables, is quite healthy. In these foods the sugar is combined with the natural fibers, vitamins, minerals, enzymes and so on, and thus prevents insulin spikes in the body. But when sugar is extracted and used on its own, willy nilly, in everything from cereal to ketchup, from crackers to packaged meats, from soups to pastries and everywhere in between, this is when sugar becomes hazardous to your pain threshold. Nancy Appleton, PhD, author of no less than nine books on the effects of sugar to the human body, has listed 141 reasons why sugar ruins your health. And she provides medical documentation. Check her website at: [http://nancyappleton.com/141-reasons-sugar-ruins-your-health/](http://nancyappleton.com/141-reasons-sugar-ruins-your-health/)

3) **Aspartame and MSG.** These two chemicals are excitotoxins. Excitotoxins are amino acids that serve as neurotransmitters in the brain. Our brains use minute amounts of excitotoxins for successful transmitting – one cell communicating with another. But when we input **mega** doses of these excitotoxins into our body - our brain - they actually become so overly excited and fire their impulses so rapidly that they can actually excite themselves to exhaustion and eventually die. Dead neurotransmitters in the brain are not good! **Aspartame**, a poor substitute for sugar, is found in diet drinks and diet or “low sugar” foods. But it’s also found in yogurt, instant breakfasts, multivitamins, instant tea, chewing gum, wine coolers, cocoa mixes and much more! **MSG** (monosodium glutamate) is a flavor enhancer found in all manner of soups and sauces like Worcestershire sauce, soy and A-1 sauce. But it is also injected into red meats and cheese. It’s in
pureed tomatoes and many other canned items. But you may not find the name “MSG” on the label because it has up to forty different aliases! Look for words like autolyzed and hydrolyzed or caseinate and natural flavoring and yeast extract and 36 more. Accent is pure MSG. For more information on these and other dangerous excitotoxins visit http://www.mpwhi.com/main.htm

4) **Caffeine.** This is another one of those things that had never bothered us before. So why would it make a difference now? All I know is that I used to drink coffee by the potful and never thought anything about it. But when I heard that it might make a difference in my Fibromyalgia pain, I cut back—I couldn’t bring myself to give it up all together. I gradually got down to two cups a day, one in the morning and one around 2:00 pm. Then I cut back even more by making those two cups half hot water and half coffee. Wow! What a difference! I don’t know exactly the how or the why of it, but I won’t start drinking coffee again like I used to, that’s for sure! But don’t forget caffeine is in many soft drinks too. Some have a lot more than others.

**Note:**

Tea has caffeine also. However, it also has a lovely little ingredient called L-Theanine, which nearly cancels out the jittery effects of the caffeine. In fact, L-Theanine is used in over-the-counter sleep aids—not because it puts you to sleep, but because it allows your body to relax enough to allow you to sleep. And of course, herbal tea has no caffeine at all.

Chocolate. Though there may be caffeine in chocolate, I rationalize that chocolate helps build my serotonin levels, and a bit here and a bit there may actually be GOOD for me. Right? And dark chocolate has an abundance of antioxidants, especially a product called Xoçai Chocolate, which has added extra antioxidants!

5) **Excess hydrogenated and trans fatty foods.** You may have heard already that hydrogenated foods and trans fats are not good for a body. But you need to know that they are especially hard on a body in pain. They add to inflammation. They also add to weight, which in turn can add to Fibromyalgia pain, not to mention depression. The problem is, you will find these fats in nearly everything in a package or box or wrapper in the grocery store. Check the labels. You’ll also find them in the refrigerator section—check out your favorite margarine. (Actually a small amount of real butter is healthier.) And the freezer section—check out the pizzas and frozen dinners. You’d have to look long and hard to avoid hydrogenated fats and trans fats in a regular grocery store. Consider shopping in a health food store—they go to great pains to keep the healthiest foods on their shelves. And most of them are very low or totally devoid of these hazardous fats. In any event, even if you can’t delete them totally from your diet, try to cut down on them and you may very well cut down on your pain.

6) **Gluten.** Gluten is a small protein found in wheat, barley and rye, which can wreak havoc on your body, and you’d never even guess that that was the problem. The symptoms of gluten sensitivity are so very numerous, and appear so much like many other conditions, that it’s rarely even checked by a physician, unless you request the tests. Although it’s not as serious as its close cousin, Celiac Disease, it is thought to be one of the most under-diagnosed conditions around. Symptoms range from bone pain to anxiety to constipation to migraines, muscle weakness, psoriasis and much more. The symptoms are tricky though; they may not show up until a day or two later. Although not an actual symptom of Fibromyalgia, a large number of us do indeed have a sensitivity to it. An elimination test that you can perform yourself, may tell if you have a
sensitivity to gluten. It may help to check out www.glutenfreeworks.com, or any of the many gluten web sites, to find all the foods where gluten can hide. *Hint:* It’s everywhere!

7) **Lactose.** Lactose intolerance is really very common. This is probably because a huge percentage of the adult human race is lacking the enzyme lactase. And like gluten sensitivity they may never even realize it. The symptoms, which usually occur within 30 minutes to two hours after ingesting milk or some milk products, are bloating, gas, lower intestinal cramps or pains, diarrhea or nausea. If the sensitivity is not severe, you may be able to use lactase capsules or drops to fend off those symptoms and still have ice cream (or milk). An Elimination Test will help here too. To find out more check out www.foodintol.com or any of the many lactose intolerance websites.

8) **Soft drinks.** Soft drinks may very well rank number one as an aggravator of Fibromyalgia pain. They also aggravate existing Arthritis and Osteoporosis and a number of other autoimmune conditions. The sugar factor and the aspartame factor have already been mentioned above, but the phosphates in soft drinks are the worst aggravators of pain. Phosphates can literally steal magnesium, calcium and potassium cells from your muscles, organs, blood, brain and bones. This causes pain - both muscular pain and nerve pain. Your body really, really NEEDS magnesium and calcium and potassium. And when these phosphate cells latch onto the magnesium, calcium and potassium cells (and others), they unceremoniously escort these beneficial cells out of the body, because they can’t function when they are combined with phosphates. They are trapped within the phosphate cells. You can see where, over time, if you continue to lose these minerals daily and don’t input enough to “match” the loss, your muscles, brain, bones, etc would slowly, but steadily become insufficient in these minerals, creating pain all the way. To “match” this loss, it takes up to 32 glasses of alkaline (pH 9) water to neutralize the phosphoric acid (pH) in just one can of soda pop! This doesn’t even account for all the fruits and veggies it would take to add these beneficial cells back into your body!

*If you personally find other foods that can affect your pain, please e-mail me at patichandler@yahoo.com and let me know. I’d love to share this information with others. If a certain food affects YOU badly, chances are it may affect others also. Thanks. We all have to look out for each other, right?*