



# THE HIDDEN CAUSE: FOOD AND RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

A review of published works on the relationship between food and Rheumatoid Arthritis

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# The Hidden Cause: Food and Rheumatoid Arthritis

*'There are 3 known causes of most disease. Breakfast, lunch and dinner'*

- Dr John McDougall

When you have Rheumatoid Arthritis you get used to hearing bad news. Bad news about your disease, bad news about your blood test results, bad news about your x-rays, bad news about your drug requirements and bad news about your future.

So, I am very, very pleased to be the bearer of some good news for you.

For over 30 years research has been conducted to establish the link between foods and Rheumatoid Arthritis to try and understand the connection between certain dietary approaches and the effects on joint pain and inflammation. Dozens of studies have been conducted with hundreds of patients with RA around the world. The results? The link between what you put in your body and your pain levels that is so strong that RA can be 'turned on' and 'turned off' in many sufferers just by changing their diet. Many people live pain-free by just modifying what they eat instead of being heavily medicated all the time on toxic drugs. And some people are somewhere in the middle, where they need a combination of reduced medication and some dietary changes to keep their inflammation at a safe, normal level.

But *everybody* appears to benefit from elimination of the worst 'offending' foods and a shift to an RA-friendly diet.

If I had known this at the start of my disease I would have avoided an enormous amount of suffering. I had chronic RA so bad that it got into my chest and jaw so that with every breath and bite of food I would be in agony. So I had to do my own research and find out what could be done because life could not go on this way.

It took me years before I pieced together everything to understand the link between RA and my diet. Although your Rheumatologist may tell you there is no link between diet and your disease, consider below the 22 examples of

experiments that have shown otherwise.

Just to get us started, let's look at the power of fasting so you can see what happens when people with RA stop eating:

## **Fasting**

- 14 patients went on a one-week water fast. During fasting the duration of morning stiffness, and number and size of swollen joints decreased in all 14 patients. No adverse effects of fasting were seen except transient weakness and lightheadedness. The authors consider fasting as one possible way to induce rapid improvement in rheumatoid arthritis [2]
- A 52-year-old woman with 11 years of RA with exacerbations allegedly associated with meat, milk, and beans was first fasted for 3 days and removed from medication (Vivonex). After fasting her swollen joints were gone. By reintroducing cow's milk all pain and swelling returned. [3]
- 15 patients with RA fasted for between 7 to 10 days. Almost all patients showed substantial improvement. Many patients felt the return of pain and stiffness on the day after returning to their "normal" eating and all benefit was lost after a week [4]
- 16 patients with rheumatoid arthritis went on a 7-10 day with a fruit-and vegetable juice fast, followed by a lacto vegetarian (dairy products) diet for 9 weeks. One-third of the patients improved during the fast, but all deteriorated when the milk products were reintroduced [5]
- 43 patients across three hospitals underwent a water fast for one week. Overall, the group improved significantly during the fast. In 31 patients evaluated, 25 had "fair" to "excellent" responses and 6 had "poor" responses. Those with more advanced arthritis had the poor responses. [6]
- The intestinal permeability was measured on 5 patients with rheumatoid arthritis who fasted on 3 liters of fruit and vegetable juice daily and a lacto vegetarian diet. The results indicated that fasting may improve disease activity and reduce the intestinal permeability while the lacto vegetarian diet did not [7]
- Twenty patients with arthritis and various skin diseases were studied during a 2-week period of modified fasting on vegetarian broth and drinks, followed by a 3-week period of a vegan diet. In many patients the joint pains were less intense during fasting. An improvement was observed during the fast for some types of skin diseases (atopic eczema, Palmaris et plantaris, pustulosis). Once

moving onto the vegan diet, disease symptoms returned in most patients, with the exception of some psoriasis patients who experienced an improvement. The vegan diet used in this study was high in fat (42% fat). [8]

As you can see from the above summary, by eliminating food from most RA patients they tend to improve. This is very powerful information indeed! It is telling us loud and clear that the symptoms for most sufferers of Rheumatoid Arthritis is brought upon by eating.

But we cannot live without food, so what about just a change in diet? Let us look at what the researchers found with regards to various food sensitivities:

### **Food Sensitivities**

- When a 16-year-old girl with lupus (another autoimmune disease) changed to a 100% vegetarian diet and ceased steroid use (without permission from her doctor) her antibody titers (a reflection of disease activity) fell to normal and her kidney disease improved [9]
- In 1987, 41 patients with RA were treated with a 4-week elimination diet. Twenty-three improved. [10]
- A report showed that out of 46 adults with RA who eliminated dairy products and cereals 78% responded favorably with 17 clearly improved, and 19 in complete remission for one to five years. Eight of those 19 stopped all medications with no relapse. Favorable benefits appeared before the end of the third month in 32 of the patients [11]
- A 6-week, placebo-controlled, single-blinded study on 48 RA sufferers showed that 85% of them identified foods that produced symptoms. Over half of the sufferers worsened when challenged with cereals such as corn and wheat [12]
- An exclusion diet improved the condition of 24 of 72 rheumatoid patients. Food sensitivities were reported to: grains in 14, milk in 4, nuts in 8, beef in 4, cheese in 7, eggs in 5, and chicken in 1, fish in 1, potato in 1, and liver in 1 [13]
- In 1988, 14 patients with rheumatoid arthritis were put on a diet free from pulses, cereals, milk, and non-vegetarian protein foods. Ten (71%) showed significant clinical improvement. Only three patients stayed on the diet for a period of 10 months [14]
- Nenonen tested the effects of an uncooked vegan diet, rich in lactobacilli, in rheumatoid patients randomized into diet and control groups. The intervention group experienced subjective relief of rheumatic symptoms

during intervention. A return to an omnivorous diet aggravated symptoms. The results showed that an uncooked vegan diet, rich in lactobacilli, decreased subjective symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis [15]

- It was shown that an elemental diet (which is an hypoallergenic protein-free artificial diet consisting of essential amino acids, glucose, trace elements and vitamins) given to 24 patients with RA led to improved strength and arthritic symptoms. Reintroduction of food brought the old symptoms back [16]
- A hypoallergenic, artificial diet was tried on six rheumatoid patients. Placebo controlled rechallenges showed intolerance for specific foodstuffs in four patients. In two patients, biopsy of the joints showed specific (IgE) antibodies to certain foods [17]
- In 1991 Darlington published a report detailing 100 patients who had undergone dietary manipulation therapy in the past decade. Of the patients, one-third were still well and controlled on diet alone without any medication up to 7 ½ years after starting the diet treatment. They found most patients reacted to cereals and dairy products [18]
- 44 patients with rheumatoid arthritis were treated with the elimination of food and chemical avoidance. They were then challenged with foods. Wheat, corn, and beef were the greatest offenders [19]
- 27 patients went on a modified fast with vegetable broths, followed by a vegan diet, and then a lacto-vegetarian diet. Significant improvement occurred in objective and subjective parameters of their disease [20] A two-year follow-up examination found all diet responders but only half of the diet nonresponders still following the diet, further indicating that a group of patients with rheumatoid arthritis benefit from dietary manipulations and that the improvement can be sustained through a two-year period [21] Patients dropping out with arthritic flares in the diet group left the study mainly when the lacto vegetarian diet (dairy products) were introduced [22]
- Hafstrom et al reported on an experiment in which sixty-six patients with active RA were randomized to either a vegan diet free of gluten (38 patients) or a well-balanced non-vegan diet (28 patients) for 12 months. Of the diet completers, 40.5% in the vegan group improved compared with 4% in the non-vegan group. The authors concluded “The data provide evidence that dietary modification may be of clinical benefit for certain RA patients, and that this benefit may be related to a reduction in immunoreactivity to food antigens eliminated by the change in diet [23].
- Dr McDougall et al demonstrated the effects of a very low-fat, vegan diet on patients on 24 patients with rheumatoid arthritis over a 4-week period. The

results showed that all aspects of the patients' RA decreased significantly, except for duration of morning stiffness. After just 4 weeks, average levels of C-reactive protein decreased 16%, RA factor decreased 10%, while erythrocyte sedimentation rate was unchanged. Dr McDougall concluded "This study showed that patients with moderate-to-severe RA, who switch to a very low-fat, vegan diet can experience significant reductions in RA symptoms". [24]

From this set of research we can now safely accept that the majority of patients with RA can find significant improvement to their condition by eliminating the source of their food allergies. However, the challenge is that there is no particular single one allergy cause for each person and that offending foods for some folks are ok for others. This makes things difficult, yet not impossible, since there are some types of foods that come up most often as being triggers for RA patients. These are fats, meats, dairy products and some grains. The final study listed above conducted by Dr John McDougall showed how minimizing fats and eliminating dairy helped all RA patients. Let's look at other studies that support this evidence, starting with Fat:

### **Fat**

- A fat-free diet produced complete remission in 6 patients with rheumatoid arthritis. Pain and swelling returned to the patients within 24 to 72 hours after they consumed a high-fat meal such as chicken, cheese, safflower oil, beef, or coconut oil. The authors concluded, "...dietary fats in amounts normally eaten in the American diet cause the inflammatory joint changes seen in rheumatoid arthritis." [25]

Consider also below what the literature says about the link between RA and dairy products.

### **Dairy Products**

In the book 'Vegetarian and Vegan Nutrition', author G. Eisman, states "Rheumatoid arthritis is more severe than osteoarthritis...Since this type of joint pain can be a symptom of a food allergy, dietary change sometimes has a profound effect. Dairy products, the most common food allergen, are one likely candidate as a contributing causative factor." [26]

In his book 'No Milk, by Daniel Twogood, D.C. "In systemic arthritis, like Rheumatoid, the cause is coursing through the blood, and it got there through the

diet. When all of the joints are involved, the cause is not physical, but chemical. It's usually casein. (Eighty percent of milk protein is casein). I once saw a 65 year old man, Bob, who complained of neck stiffness and headaches. His hands were so stiff and sore. Bob lived to play golf. I instructed him to give up all milk and dairy products. Since giving up dairy products, he no longer experienced pain and headaches, and his hands were also pain-free. Joy, a 42 year old woman noticed that her knees were pain-free after eliminating dairy products. Once, after drinking a glass of milk, her knees swelled within 20 minutes." [27]

Doctor Neal Barnard writes "Certain foods trigger the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis and eliminating these foods sometimes causes even long-standing symptoms to improve or even remit entirely. It is important to avoid the problem foods completely, as even a small amount can cause symptoms. All dairy products should be avoided: skim or whole cow's milk, goat's milk, cheese, yogurt, cream, etc." [28]

Below are three scientific studies to support the above claims about dairy products:

- A 38-year-old mother with 11-years of rheumatoid arthritis recovered from her disease and attained full mobility by stopping all dairy products. Since her early 20s the patient had had a passion for cheese, consuming up to 1 lb (0.4 kg) a day. Although there was no clear history of allergy or diarrhoea after eating cheese she agreed to try the effect of restricting dairy produce, with the elimination of milk, cheese, and butter from her diet. The authors reported "Three weeks after starting the diet she began to feel better - both the synovitis and the morning stiffness diminished. She was reexamined frequently over many months, and eventually morning stiffness completely disappeared and the synovitis almost completely resolved...The improvement was maintained, apart from when she inadvertently ate dairy produce again-after which the symptoms returned within 12 hours" [29]
- An experiment was conducted where all dairy products were removed from the diet of patients with seronegative rheumatoid arthritis. Out of 15 patients, 7 went into remission [30]
- A comparison was made of the arthritis-inducing properties of cow's milk, egg protein and soy milk in experimental animals. The 12-week cow's milk feeding regimen produced the highest incidence of significant joint lesions. Egg protein

was less arthritis-inducing than cow's milk, and soy milk caused no reaction. [31]

## Meat

A review of meat was undertaken by a set of scientists who published the following conclusion about the consumption of meat and Rheumatoid Arthritis:

- “...meat and meat fat have been found to have the highest dietary links to RA symptoms”. The authors conclude that “The primary finding of the literature review and statistical analyses is that meat and offal may be a major risk factor for the expression of RA. The fats may contribute through inflammation or free radical production”. [32]

All of the above scientific research, along with my own experience with my diet and pain levels, made me 100% convinced of the diet-disease link. As if that wasn't enough, there are also reports in the general literature from doctors and patients describing experiences with RA recovery. Admittedly, published success stories are few and far between. However, they do exist as we will see next.

One of my first sources of inspiration for using foods to heal came from the work of Dr Barbara Allan, author of 'Conquering Arthritis' and previous RA sufferer. Barbara's work was pioneering, and gave me the belief that I, too, could overcome this crippling disease. In the early stages of my condition I also read a book by Sonia St Claire called 'Freedom from Rheumatoid Arthritis' in which she describes her cure via a raw-food diet. Other success stories include the husband of Victoria Boutenko, whose story is told at the start of Victoria's book 'Green Smoothie Revolution'. Dr Andrew Saul, author of 'Doctor Yourself' describes in his book how both his mother and a patient healed their RA through dietary changes. Finally, there is the work of Dr John McDougall, who has described the complete healing of 'many' of his patients at his live-in programs.

Table 1 below summarizes the general approach described by each of these authors for the their own healing, or for that of their patients:

Author	Primary Approach
Dr Barbara Allan	Fasting, Elimination Diet, Raw Foods and Green Juices
Sonia St Claire	Raw Foods
Victoria Boutenko's Husband	Raw Foods, in the form of Green Smoothies

Dr Andrew Saul's Patients	
- His Mother	High quantities of raw sprouted lentils
- Mrs. Kelremor	Raw foods and vegetable juices
Dr John McDougall's Patients	Low-fat, whole-foods plant-based diet

**Table 1** – Authors who have described the healing of RA and the primary method used.

All of the reports that are summarized in Table 1 used dietary intervention as their method to cure RA. Further to this, the diets that were used had the following in common:

- Free of meat products
- Free of dairy products
- Lower in calories than the Standard American Diet (SAD)
- No preservatives or artificial items
- Raw food component

Four out of five of them were also low in fat (Barbara's approach is more via identifying food sensitivities, rather than a one-diet-for all approach). I am unaware of anywhere in the world where a person has been successful in reversing RA using a systematic process that *does not* include a dietary change.

After I got well, a discussion with my Rheumatologist gave me a final insight into this diet-and-disease puzzle. I showed up to his clinic drug-free for the first time in years and described to him the humble plant-based diet that had allowed my body to heal. Naturally, he was impressed, and laughed that I was one-of-a-kind in my determination and my results were incredible, which was a nice pat on the back. After these congratulations, he shared with me a story about the connection between diet and RA which involved some Prisoners of War (POW's) that survived World War 2 camps in Changi, Burma under the control of the Japanese army. The Australians and New Zealanders who were imprisoned there were fed extremely small, basic meals such as rice and potatoes. An Australian doctor, Dr 'Weary' Dunlop, who was also imprisoned at the camp and cared for his sick comrades, wrote regular newsletters to a supportive community in Australia, where he described the POW camps and reported how they were fairing in the tough conditions. To the surprise of the medical community, all sufferers of RA went into remission on the measly camp diet. These newsletters are now available for the public to read and I am in the process of trying to get my

hands on the reports, which I believe are located in Canberra, Australia to include in a later edition of this book.

I am not telling you this final story to scare you into thinking that we have to eat like POW's! I just wanted to add this story, along with the 23 scientific papers who describe a dietary link and the 5 contemporary authors who have cured themselves, or others, to show you that my case of regaining my health is not a one-off incident. On the contrary, people have been overcoming RA, and I believe they will continue to overcome RA, wherever radical interventions to diets are made and sustained.

### **So where to go from here?!**

Some people find the thought of a dietary change overwhelming and challenging, to say the least. Fortunately, I've made this easy for everyone by putting together a plan which not just eliminates all of the proven 'triggers' of RA but also rebuilds the intestines so that foods that previously hurt RA sufferers can then be eaten again.

In my 118-page book 'The Paddison Program for Rheumatoid Arthritis' I show you exactly how to

- Rebuild your intestines to a robust working order so that more and more foods can be enjoyed again without causing pain.
- Work with your Rheumatologist to work your way off medications or eliminate them altogether
- Avoid the additional offending foods (not reviewed in any scientific research above) that must be eliminated to fully recover
- Accelerate your healing (it's all about healing your intestines and the rest follows)
- Avoid ALL disease triggers with hearty, nutritious meals

This creates permanent and genuine pain relief for most sufferers. Visit [www.rheumatoidarthritisprogram.com](http://www.rheumatoidarthritisprogram.com)

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