Practical Meal Planning for Inflammatory Arthritis

DIET AND NUTRITION



Why Meal Plan

Eating well when dealing with an inflammatory condition can feel like a daunting task. Symptoms such as pain and fatigue vary daily and are often unpredictable. Planning ahead minimises decisions when you're feeling unwell. Having a small selection of homemade ready meals available can make healthy, nourishing eating easier to achieve.

Build the Foundation

- **Rainbow power:** Colourful vegetables, fruit and wholegrains daily. Frozen vegetables are very helpful and convenient (6+ servings/day).

- **Essential fatty acids:** Replace butter and coconut oil with extra virgin olive oil, salmon, sardines, trout or mackerel (olive oil; 2tbsp daily, oily fish twice weekly).

- **Base your carbohydrates around wholegrains:** This could include oats, brown rice, buckwheat and quinoa (3-5 servings daily).

- **Add protein with each meal:** Eggs, yoghurt (including the high protein version), beans, lentils, tofu, chicken or fish to support the rebuilding of skeletal muscles (3-4 servings weekly).

- **Limit ultra-processed foods (UPFs):** reduce sugary drinks, processed meats, fried foods and foods high in saturated fat where possible.

- **Plan for rainy days:** Always have a few meals in the freezer. Tinned fish and microwave rice are an example of a minimal effort 'ready meal'.

3-Day Sample Meal Plan

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack Idea
Monday	Poached egg on seeded bread with avocado, tomato and spinach	Wholegrain pasta with fresh tuna and mixed leaf salad	Salmon, roasted vegetables and brown rice	Greek yoghurt with blueberries
Tuesday	Protein yoghurt with walnuts and mango	Omelette with reduced fat grated cheese, tomato and mushrooms plus sourdough toast	Teriyaki chicken stir-fry with cashew nuts and egg noodles	Carrot sticks with hummus
Wednesday	Wholegrain toast with scrambled eggs and spinach	Tinned four-bean mix with salad vegetables and couscous	Turkey steak with Mexican rice and vegetables	Handful of nuts

Your Shopping List

- **Fruit and vegetables:** frozen and/or fresh mixed colourful fruit and vegetables.

- **Protein:** oily fish (fresh/tinned), chicken, turkey, eggs, protein/Greek yoghurt, beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu, Quorn.

- **Wholegrains:** oats, brown rice, quinoa, wholemeal bread, wholewheat pasta.

- **Fats:** olive oil, walnuts, almonds, chia seeds, flaxseed, avocado.

- **Herbs:** garlic, ginger, turmeric, dill.

Helpful 'Plan B' Strategies

- Use frozen vegetables, microwave grains and tinned beans or tinned fish to reduce chopping and cooking time.

- Batch-cook each week. Meals such as soup, chilli, curry or stew can be frozen in portions.

- 'Flare Day Survival': Have handy food options such as oats, Weetabix, tinned soups and fish, beans, rye crackers, nut butter and UHT milk.

- Prepare ingredients while seated where possible, and use lightweight pans, jar openers and pre-chopped foods if hand pain is a problem.

Useful resources

- Browse healthy, **Arthritis-Friendly Recipes**: https://www.arthritisaction.org.uk/living-with-arthritis/resource-centre/recipes

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