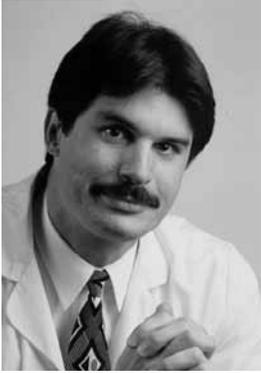


The Fibromyalgia Diet

Protein Matters



Mark Pellegrino, MD

Why recommend protein specifically?

One of the risks of fibromyalgia (FMS) is a hypoglycemia/insulin hyper-sensitivity. This dysfunctional carbohydrate/insulin response contributes to achiness, fatigue, brain fog and can aggravate or perpetuate other FMS symptoms. Add the slow metabolism to the inability to exercise due to pain and the result may be added pounds as well. By altering the protein/carb ratio in favor of protein, you can enhance metabolism and calorie burning abilities. Some may find they lose weight, too.

Protein is needed for its amino acid profile. These building blocks make up healthy muscle tissue. Protein provides the basis for brain neurotransmitters (messengers) like serotonin and dopamine, known to be low in FMS. For instance, everybody knows a big turkey meal makes you sleepy; turkey is a good source of the amino acid tryptophan which converts to serotonin and helps modulate sleep (and pain, too). On the other hand, simple carbs via white flour and sugar are too prevalent in the American diet, provoking insulin spikes. Fibrous veggies, whole grain carbs and protein all work to slow insulin.

What about protein shakes?

A protein shake made with a pure protein blend offers the full spectrum of amino acids. It's an easy way to add your healthy oil like flax, low fat yogurt and fibrous fruits and/or veggies. Some powders include branched chain amino acids (BCAAs), helpful for muscle tissue repair. Because they do not get absorbed via the liver, BCAAs contribute to energy metabolism in place of carbs and fats, while helping to regulate insulin, a bonus benefit for FMS. Whey protein appears to offer a better protein profile than casein or soy.^{1,2}

What are examples of a healthy diet profile?

Lean protein can include turkey, chicken and fish. Eggs are a good protein source. Low carb and fibrous veggies (broccoli, cabbage, greens). Low fat dairy (yogurt, cottage cheese, milk, cheese). Healthy oils (fish, flax). Low carb high protein bars and shakes can help as meal replacements. Just think protein at every meal. Choose desserts with protein, too. Did you know ice cream has a low glucose absorption? Add nuts for a special splurge.

Any other special considerations?

Protein is only one part of making healthy choices and I devoted a diet chapter in my book, *Fibromyalgia: Up Close and Personal*. Individual needs will vary, but with any FMS diet, we need to include these things daily as well: 6-8 glasses of pure water, nutritional supplements (especially a multiple) to optimize nutrition and energy levels. Include regular activity if you can. Stop and think about what you are putting

in your mouth and ask yourself if there is a way to get the same type of food with a more favorable result (example a baked potato with low fat sour cream or cheese with broccoli vs. a butter laden tater).

Are there other health benefits to this diet?

Everyone's nutritional balance is different, and there are no magical nutritional approaches to cure FMS. Rather, there are effective nutritional approaches that can be part of the successful treatment. You should notice more energy and less pain, better weight control and more mental alertness, better sleep and fewer fluctuations in symptoms. You can control stress better, be less anxious and less depressed. Plus, a good diet for your fibromyalgia will also make you healthier overall. If your FMS bothers you less, you will feel better about yourself as a result of your nutritional lifestyle changes and you will have improved your well-being.

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References

1. Tang et al, Ingestion of Whey Hydrolysate, Casein or Soy Protein Isolate: Effects on Mixed Muscle Protein, Synthesis at Rest and Following Resistance Exercise, *J Appl Physiol* 2009;107:987-992.
2. Thomson, R.L: Protein Hydrolysates and Tissue Repair, *Nutrition Research Reviews* 2011;24:191-197.
3. Pellegrino, M. *Fibromyalgia: Up Close and Personal*. Chapter 17. Anadem Pub., 2004.

Dr. Pellegrino offers a personal look at FMS based on his clinical practice experience of more than 15,000 patients as well as his own. For the complete FMS diet, order Code 801 – Fibromyalgia: Up Close and Personal available from TyH.

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