

Diet for Myasthenia

Myasthenia gravis is an autoimmune disorder in which the immune system mistakenly attacks chemical receptors in the body that help control voluntary muscle movements such as chewing, swallowing and talking. This muscle weakness can make everyday living difficult. Like other autoimmune disorders, it can go into remission for long periods of time. No official diet exists for this condition, but implementing certain dietary strategies will help.

Consult with your doctor about your diet before making any drastic changes.

Diet and the Immune System

What you eat can greatly impact immune system function. If you have an autoimmune condition like myasthenia gravis, avoiding certain foods can avoid irritating an already malfunctioning immune system. In the same vein, eating certain foods might contribute to better function. A diet that encourages better immune function might help with symptoms of the condition and encourage remissions. Physician, author and integrative medicine expert Dr. Andrew Weil strongly recommends dietary changes as part of any treatment strategy for autoimmune disorders.

Reducing Immune System Irritation

Weil recommends cutting back on foods that trigger inflammation, which can promote the harmful autoimmune response. Foods that contribute to inflammation include animal proteins, foods that have trans-fats, polyunsaturated oils like corn, sunflower and safflower oil, white flour foods and foods high in table sugar like cookies, cakes and candy. He recommends limiting protein intake to less than 10 percent of your total caloric intake and focusing on non-animal sources such as beans, nuts, legumes and soy. Dairy products can irritate the immune system, and Weil recommends reducing your intake if you have an autoimmune disorder.

Easing Inflammation

Since inflammation might trigger the autoimmune response, you want to eat foods that ease inflammation in addition to avoiding ones that worsen it. Good choices include good fats found in olive and canola oil and foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids such as fatty fish, walnuts and flaxseed. Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, the richest sources of antioxidants---nutrients that prevent cell damage, ease inflammation and promote a healthy immune system. Eat the full range of colors to ensure you consume the full range of beneficial nutrients.

Importance of Potassium

Low levels of potassium can lead to fatigue, a common problem if you have myasthenia gravis. Eat foods rich in potassium to ensure adequate stores in your body. Potassium-rich foods include bananas, low-fat dairy, lean meats like chicken and turkey, fish and a wide range of fruits and vegetables.

Eating for Your Condition

The Australian Myasthenic Association recommends eating smaller meals throughout the day rather than three large ones to reduce the fatigue that accompanies this condition. Do not eat foods that require a lot of chewing. Avoid crumbly foods that could get stuck in your throat and increase your risk of choking. You will probably tolerate warm meals better than hot ones. Moisten foods with sauces and gravy to make them easier to swallow. Stay away from alcohol, spicy foods, lemons and tonic water to avoid aggravating symptoms of this condition.

Considerations

Since this condition can affect your ability to eat, you run the risk of inadequate nutrition. Consider working with a dietitian or other qualified health care professional for guidance in designing an eating plan that will maximize your intake of vital nutrients. She can help you design an eating plan that takes your preferences into account.

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/228089-diet-for-myasthenia/>

Reading Nutrition Facts Labels

The Nutrition Facts label is found on food packages and has important information on it to help you decide if a food fits into your healthy eating plan. This information can also help you keep track of what kinds of foods you're eating throughout the day. Here are some tips on what to look for as you read the labels from top to bottom.

Serving size — The top of the Nutrition Facts label has the serving size and number of servings in the whole package. The rest of the label information is for just one serving size. There may be more than one serving size in a package. So it's important to keep track of how many servings you are eating.

Calories — Below the serving size section is the number of calories in one serving.

Nutrients to limit — next are fats, cholesterol, and sodium. It's best to limit these in your diet since most people usually get enough or too much of these nutrients.

Sugar — the label includes the amounts of natural sugars (like those in fruit and milk) as well as those added to a food or drink. Check the ingredients list to see if any sugars are added. Names for added sugars may include corn syrup, maltose, sucrose, and maple syrup.

Nutrients to have — Most people can use more fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron in their diets.

Choose foods that have a lot of these nutrients.

Talk to your doctor or Health Management Nurse to learn other ways you can build and keep healthy eating habits.