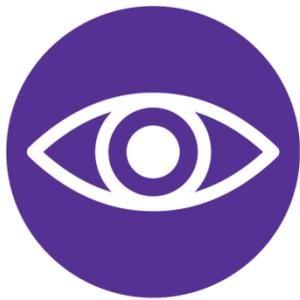


Choices



Diet and nutrition



Read me...

Diet and nutrition

A well-balanced, healthy diet is important for everybody to maintain optimum health. Many people diagnosed with MS have questions about whether changes to their diet and nutrition can assist in symptom management. Although not conclusively proven, a number of people with MS have found that, by changing their diet, they find relief from some of their MS symptoms.

Several diets have been created with MS in mind. Similar themes run through these diets; most involve taking supplements and restricting or eliminating food groups.

Here is an overview of a selection of the more popular diets.

The Wahls Protocol

Dr Terry Wahls is a clinical professor of medicine at the University of Iowa. In 2000 she was diagnosed with relapsing-remitting MS. A diagnosis of secondary progressive MS followed in 2003. As her condition progressed, Dr Wahls started to use a tilt-recline wheelchair, a situation that continued for four years.

Shortly after Dr Wahls underwent chemotherapy in an attempt to arrest the progression of her condition, she began re-reading and re-learning everything she had previously studied about biochemistry, immunology and cell biology. She designed a regime of supplements to 'feed the brain'.

In 2007 Dr Wahls worked with Functional Medicine, an organisation focused on working with doctors to improve the health of people with chronic illnesses.

As a result, Dr Wahls designed a diet to replace the supplements called the Wahls Protocol™. This diet is based on key elements of the 'hunter-gatherer' diet. Dr Wahls attributes this protocol to an improvement in her health and motor function. She can now walk without mobility aids and cycles to work.

Dr Wahls uses these diets and protocols in her primary care and traumatic brain injury clinics. She is also leading a clinical trial to test her protocols on others.

Dr Wahls recipes are gluten-, dairy- and egg-free.

The Swank diet

Another diet which people with MS have reported to have found beneficial is the Swank diet. Dr Roy Swank began his research over 60 years ago in 1948. His observations of the prevalence of MS in certain geographies led him to believe there was a correlation between MS and diet. Dr Swank believed a low fat diet would help to alleviate some MS symptoms.

The Swank diet recommends a reduction in consumption of saturated and unsaturated fat which can be found in meat (particularly red meat) and processed foods, dairy and products containing dairy.

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The Swank diet also recommends taking cod liver oil and vitamins.

The Overcoming Multiple Sclerosis diet

Drawing on the Swank research, Professor George Jelinek's approach focuses on a plant-based, very low saturated fat diet, with omega 3 supplements in the form of fish, fish oil or flaxseed oil. Professor Jelinek was diagnosed with MS in 1999. His mother also had MS.

The Overcoming Multiple Sclerosis diet is part of a whole program that also includes supplements, vitamin D, exercise and meditation.

Professor Jelinek's foundation holds retreats in Australia and the UK. The retreats support people with MS in making the lifestyle changes to follow the program.

The Paleo diet

The Paleo diet advocates that people return to the diet of our ancestors from Paleolithic times – an era where there was no modern farming and people were hunter-gathers, consuming food they caught or foraged for.

The Paleo diet is centered on the idea that the modern diet might be a cause of modern health problems. There is a suggestion that the Paleo diet can be helpful for conditions such as is diabetes, obesity, heart disease and also multiple sclerosis.

The Paleo diet is based on nutrient-rich, organic wholefoods including meat and fish, fruit and vegetables (particularly green leafy vegetables and berries), seeds (particularly sprouted seeds) and nuts, fermented foods such as kimchi and sauerkraut.

The Paleo diet restricts the consumption of processed foods including some processed oils (sunflower oil, corn oil for example), dairy produce, legumes (beans, chick peas, soy beans), flour and all sources of refined sugar. It aims to eliminate all pesticides and additives from the diet while increasing essential amino and fatty acids.

Because the Paleo diet is based on high-quality animal and fish proteins, it is not suitable for vegetarians. The Paleo diet can be challenging and some supplementation may be required as the Paleo diet can be low in calcium.

The Best Bet diet

Ashton Embry Ph.D. first wrote about the link between MS and nutrition in 1996. His Best Bet Diet is based on the theory that an autoimmune process is ignited by undigested food proteins escaping through the gut wall into the circulatory system. The immune system sees these proteins as invaders and starts to attack. He refers to this as 'leaky gut syndrome'.

Ashton Embry believes that the molecular structure of the protein of certain foods is very similar to the proteins in myelin. The immune system cannot tell the difference between these food proteins and its own

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cells and attacks the myelin as well as the food proteins.

The Best Bet Diet says that stopping, or restricting the consumption of foods that have a molecular structure similar to myelin, reduces the autoimmune response. Foods that are said to have a similar structure to myelin are:

- Dairy – including all animal milks and butters, cheeses and yoghurts made from animal milks and all products that contain them. A suitable alternative is rice milk or low-fat coconut milk
- Gluten – found in wheat, rye, oats and barley, and all products containing them. These can be replaced by rice, corn, quinoa and gluten-free flours and grains
- Legumes – beans, peas and pulses, especially soya, and all products containing them. All other vegetables are allowed
- Refined Sugar – although not a protein, refined sugar is believed to make leaking of food proteins worse. Alternative natural sweetening agents include honey, maple syrup, fruit sugar (fructose) and stevia

It is also suggested that a person wishing to follow the Best Bet Diet has an ELISA blood test to identify the foods they may be sensitive to. Details of the ELISA blood test are below.

As an additional precaution, it is suggested that an ELISA blood test is carried out (further details below) to

identify which foods have escaped across the leaky gut (if any) in the past. There may be a hypersensitivity issue which is contributing to the leaky gut syndrome.

In addition to The Best Bet Diet, other MS-related diets and lifestyle books also recommend the taking of supplements. A list of these can be found at the end of this leaflet.

Please note this list is not exhaustive and these are not the only diets those with MS have found beneficial. However these are the main diets specifically designed with MS in mind.

Leaky Gut Syndrome

From the NHS Choices website: 'Proponents of 'leaky gut syndrome' claim many symptoms and diseases are caused by the immune system reacting to germs, toxins or other large molecules that have been absorbed into the bloodstream via a porous ('leaky') bowel.

'There is little evidence to support this theory, and no evidence that so-called "treatments" for "leaky gut syndrome", such as nutritional supplements and a gluten-free diet, have any beneficial effect for most of the conditions they are claimed to help.'

Information about leaky gut syndrome is included in this leaflet in order to provide a balanced view and further context for the diets based on the theory of leaky gut syndrome.

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What is Leaky Gut Syndrome?

It is suggested that this allows partially digested food to pass through the gut and into the bloodstream, meaning nutrients are lost and an autoimmune response triggered.

It is suggested that typical symptoms of leaky gut syndrome include

- Fatigue
- Muscle ache
- Abdominal pain
- Raised temperature
- General malaise
- Food allergies
- Poor exercise tolerance

What causes Leaky Gut Syndrome?

Leaky gut could be caused by a number of things including candida, nutritional deficiencies, refined sugar, stress, trauma, alcohol or tobacco.

How do you test for Leaky Gut Syndrome?

The standard test for leaky gut syndrome is a mannitol and lactulose test. The test involves drinking a solution containing both these substances and then having a urine test six hours later. The amount of each substance in the urine is measured. If high levels of both mannitol and lactulose are detected then this indicates a leaky gut.

How do you treat Leaky Gut Syndrome?

You can take supplements such as

- Glutamine - the main fuel for cells of the intestine and promotes healing of the gut lining
- Probiotics, for example Lactobacillus bifidus – friendly bacteria which counteract the bad bacteria or candida and boost the immune system
- Antioxidants – e.g. proanthocyanidins from grape seeds, pycnogenol from pine bark,
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin E
- Gingko Biloba
- Zinc
- Cats Claw
- Slippery Elm

Candida

What is candida?

Candida is a natural fungus of the gut. It is believed it can proliferate through the gut and cause leaky gut syndrome.

Typical symptoms of candida include:

- General malaise
- Low energy
- Bloating and heavy gut
- Recurring infections

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What causes candida?

Candida can be caused by the over-use of antibiotics, the contraceptive pill, long term use of steroids and some other drugs which can destroy the healthy gut bacteria. Yeasts, parasites and bacteria may also be a trigger.

How do you test for candida?

A simple home-testing kit is available to test for candida. (See ELISA tests below)

How is candida treated?

Tests for candida are not generally available on the NHS, beyond testing for candida in the vagina or penis (also known as thrush) and oral thrush.

A simple home-testing kit is available. See details of ELISA tests below.

ELISA testing

An ELISA test is a blood test for food intolerances.

MS-UK currently offers two options for ELISA tests from Cambridge Nutritional Sciences or York Laboratories. They are home tests and there is no need to visit a doctor. A special kit will be sent to your home from the laboratory. All you need to do is prick your to release enough blood to soak a small swab. The test results will show if you are intolerant to 60-200 foods (depending on which option you chose) and the degree to which you are intolerant.

Cambridge Nutritional Sciences also offer a candida test which can be done at the same time as the ELISA test.

ELISA testing is also available for vegetarians and vegans at a reduced rate.

For more information about these tests please contact MS-UK.

Suggested supplements

There are a number of supplements which have been found to be beneficial in people with MS. The most common are listed below, however for a more comprehensive list, please visit our website.

Vitamin D

Some research suggests there is a link between the development of MS and vitamin D deficiency.

Calcium and magnesium

These minerals are both essential to the normal function of muscles, not only in muscle contraction but also in maintaining an appropriate level of muscle tone during periods of relaxation. The occurrence of muscle cramp due to spasm is well known to be associated with calcium deficiency. The recommended daily dose is at least 1,000mg of calcium and 500mg of magnesium.

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Omega 3 and 6

Omega 3 and Omega 6 are essential fatty acids. Omega 3 is needed for the normal function of the nervous system and the production of myelin. Omega 6 helps to regulate the immune system and has anti-viral properties. These essential fatty acids can be found in the following supplements:

- Fish oil supplements (e.g. cod liver oil) - high in Omega 3
- Evening primrose oil or starflower oil – both are high in Omega 6
- Flaxseed oil or hemp seed oil – both contain a good balance of both Omega 3 and Omega 6

B vitamins

The B vitamins are needed for the normal functioning of the nerves and brain, and for the repair and maintenance of tissue. Vitamin B12 is needed for a healthy myelin sheath, nervous system and bone marrow. It is recommended that 100mg of vitamin B complex and 1mg of vitamin B12 is taken to ensure optimum levels of these important vitamins.

Please consult your GP or neurology specialist before starting to take any supplements.

Further information

Dr Terry Wahls
www.terrywahls.com

The Best Bet diet
www.direct-ms.org/bestbet
www.ms-diet.org

The Swank diet
www.swankmsdiet.org

Overcoming Multiple Sclerosis
www.overcomingms.org

The Paleo diet
<http://thepaleodiet.com>
<http://paleoleap.com/>

NHS Choices
www.nhs.uk

Nutritionist Resource
www.nutritionist-resource.org.uk

Further reading

Vitamin D
www.ms-uk.org/choiceslife

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How we create our Choices leaflets

MS-UK believes we must listen to the voices of people affected by multiple sclerosis to shape the information and support we provide. It is these people that bring us perspectives that no one else can give.

For every Choices leaflet we produce, MS-UK consults the wider MS community to gather feedback, and uses this to inform content. All of our Choices leaflets are then reviewed by the MS-UK Virtual Insight Panel before they are published.

Thank you to everyone affected by MS who made this leaflet possible.

Sources

- None cited

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