



THE
AUSTRALIAN
PAIN SOCIETY
www.apsoc.org.au

APS Secretariat
PO Box 637
North Sydney NSW 2059
T: 02 9016 4343
E: aps@apsoc.org.au
W: www.apsoc.org.au
Twitter: [@AusPainSoc](https://twitter.com/AusPainSoc)

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOODS TO EAT IF YOU HAVE CHRONIC PAIN

With growing emphasis on lifestyle-based treatments for chronic pain, there's promising new research about the potential benefits from a specially designed, anti-inflammatory diet.

Dietitian and University of Newcastle PhD student Katherine Brain is examining the growing body of evidence indicating that foods containing nutrients such as antioxidants, Omega 3, Vitamin B, and fibre may have a role in reducing pain intensity and frequency.

Ms Brain will present her preliminary results at the Australian Pain Society annual scientific meeting in Sydney in April.

Ms Brain is completing a trial involving a group of 80 chronic pain patients to investigate whether their symptoms improve after taking a fruit juice containing high levels of anti-oxidants.

The patients, who attend Hunter Integrated Pain Service based at the John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle, are divided into different groups. Some are given the specially prepared fruit juice while others receive a regular fruit juice.

Patients also receive one-on-one consultations with personalised dietary advice specifically for pain management and setting individual nutrition and healthy lifestyle goals.

Ms Brain is examining whether patients within the group that have co-morbidities such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity, anxiety and depression, can benefit when following a healthy dietary pattern that emphasises specific nutrients.

Participants are finding the approach manageable and some have seen positive changes. Further results will be available at the conference.

Ms Brain said: "The relationship between diet and chronic pain is thought to be related to the role diet plays in limiting inflammation levels in the body and how healthy eating leads to a healthy and efficient nervous system. This in turn helps to reduce the sensation of pain and helps to improve mood and functionality."

Ms Brain is also interested in whether improving general gut health can reduce pain and inflammation. "While the link between diet and pain relief is far from proven, it's an area that warrants further research. Ultimately, by strengthening the link between pain and nutrition, then pain clinics offering physical and psychological therapies might need to include a dietitian in their program."

The research is particularly important as the focus moves away from pain-related medications and towards a holistic approach to pain management where equal attention is paid to mood, physical activity, connection and nutrition.

It's estimated that one in five Australians are living with chronic pain, which lasts more than three months after injury, surgery or illness. One in five GP consultations involves chronic pain.

Media contact: Belinda Tromp 0418 395 898
Australian Pain Society | [38th Annual Scientific Meeting](#) | 8-11 April 2018 | International Convention Centre Sydney

The Australian Pain Society (APS) is Australia's leading forum of university-trained health professionals (including GP and specialist doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, psychologists and other allied health professionals and researchers) trained in the recognition, research, management and advocacy around all aspects of pain in Australia.