

Nutrition for Nerve Repair

It is always best, if you can, to get nutrients through the food you eat. However, modern diets often fall short of recommended intakes of key nutrients and, when tested, many people have been found to be deficient. Deficiency is even more likely after injury when the demand for nutrients increase.

This article explains the key nutrients and supplements for **nerve repair**, including when and how to supplement with them.

Nutrients

Omega 3

Studies suggest that that a high level of omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids in the body could lead to protection of nerve cells and have beneficial effects on the recovery nerves after peripheral nerve injury.

Fatty fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel, anchovies, sardines and herring) are the primary source of healthy, “anti-inflammatory” omega-3 fats. These should be balanced with omega-6 fatty acid (found in processed food and vegetable oils intake) in approximately a 2:1 ratio. Most Western diets however are highly skewed in favour of omega-6 fatty acid over omega-3, sometimes in orders of 20:1! This imbalance is considered very “pro-inflammatory” and there is general agreement that individuals should consume more omega-3 and less omega-6 fatty acid to promote a healthy inflammatory response.

Omega-3 deficiency or imbalance can also manifest as physical signs in the body. These include painful and swollen hands and wrists, dry skin, eczema, diffuse redness of the skin, or cracking of the fingertips.

B Vitamins

B vitamins are extremely important for nerve health and deficiency has been linked with neuropathy and migraines. B12 deficiency has been found to be reasonable common affecting between 1.5% and 15% of the general population. Certain populations (older adults, vegetarians and vegans) are even more likely to have inadequate B vitamin levels.

Magnesium

Magnesium is a key nutrient for healing & repair. Deficiency in magnesium leads to disturbed healing and can cause numbness, tingling as well as increased inflammation, potentially leading to headache, migraine and fibromyalgia.

Unfortunately, the intake of magnesium in people eating a western-style diet is consistently shown to be lower than recommended. The use of some medications can also result in decreased levels of magnesium. These include antacids, antibiotics, anti-hypertensives (for high blood pressure), Digoxin (heart medication), oral contraceptives and HRT). The likelihood that you are deficient in magnesium increases if you suffer with more than one sign of deficiency (e.g. constipation, headache / migraine, muscle tension / cramping, numbness / tingling, osteoporosis, high blood pressure or poor sleep.)

Magnesium is usually safe, but it may interfere with the absorption of some pharmaceuticals, notably bisphosphonates (used for osteoporosis), calcium channel blockers (for high blood pressure) and some antibiotics. If you take any medication, talk to your doctor before you are supplementing magnesium.

Because magnesium is 'bulky' most multivitamins only contain a small amount. It is therefore usually better to supplement magnesium separately. Chelated forms like magnesium malate or glycinate are better absorbed.

Curcumin

Curcumin is a component of the spice turmeric. Curcumin supplementation at higher doses leads to decreases in pain and inflammation which extend to post-operative, arthritis, and general pain symptoms. One small study also noted a small reduction in symptoms in peripheral neuropathy.

Unfortunately, standard curcumin preparations are very poorly absorbed into the body. Therefore, new formulations that increase absorption have been developed. Currently, the formulation with most supporting research is "Meriva".

Supplementing Guide

1. B Vitamins

Take a Vitamin B complex (or multivitamin) containing at least B6, B9 and B12 in their active forms.

2. Omega 3

If you are not eating 2-3 servings of oily fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel, anchovies, sardines or herring) per week supplement with a good quality fish or cod liver oil. We recommend 'Rosita Cod Liver Oil' which is a great source of omega-3 fats as well as vitamins A and D.

3. Magnesium

If...

- your intake of green leafy vegetables, nuts and seeds is limited, or
- you suffer with any of the signs of deficiency (i.e. headache / migraine, muscle tension / cramping, numbness / tingling, osteoporosis or high blood pressure, poor sleep), or
- you suffer with diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, osteoporosis, or
- you are taking antacids, anti-hypertensives (for high blood pressure), Digoxin (heart medication), oral contraceptives or HRT,

Supplement with 200-400mg magnesium. Chelated forms like magnesium malate or glycinate are better absorbed.

4. Curcumin

If you suffer from chronic or severe nerve pain, consider a trial of curcumin supplementation. Make sure to take curcumin in a more bioavailable form such as in the 'Meriva' formulation.

Amrita Nutrition

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