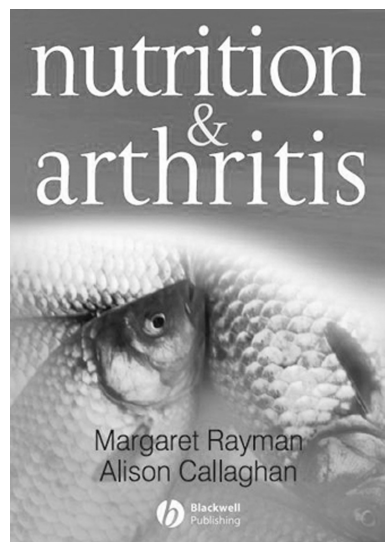


## MNF Books



### Nutrition and Arthritis

Margaret Rayman and  
Alison Callaghan  
Blackwell Publishing Limited, Oxford,  
2006, pp. 264  
ISBN-13: 9781405124188

Upon first thumbing through “Nutrition and arthritis” by Margaret Rayman and Alison Callaghan it was obvious that this book is packed with charts, tables, and graphs providing lots of information and data. Not a bad basis for a book that claims to help and guide the reader in the highly charged terrain of how to impact a widespread and devastating disease like arthritis with diet and nutrition. And the authors do not disappoint the expectation to make “informed advice available for sufferers to help them decide which of the plethora of so-called remedies are worthwhile” as they state as an aim of their book.

So much in short. The book is directed at general physicians, rheumatologists, dietitians, and nutritionists as readers. It addresses the audience in a clear, pre-

cise, and easily understandable language that, while presenting detailed physiological information, is not overcharged by scientific attitude. The authors start with a definition and pathological description of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, the two major manifestations of inflammatory joint disease the book is focused on. They pay attention to link the pathological assessment of the disease with the underlying physiological and biochemical changes in the affected joint. This is followed by a description of risk factors (genetic, environmental, dietary) and current medical management of the diseases (drug treatment, surgery, physiotherapy). The discussion of drug therapy using traditional NSAIDs (aspirin, diclofenac, paracetamol/acetaminophen, and others) and the COX-2 specific inhibitors (Vioxx and Celebrex) is succinct and up to date, including the rationale for the rapid demise of the latter ones. The remaining 2/3 of the book cover the relationship of diet and nutrition with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, including a brief section on popular dietary approaches, and separate in-depth chapters on the role of micronutrients, polyunsaturated fatty acids, glucosamine and chondroitin, and other specifically marketed foods and supplements (including ginger, green tea extracts, and exotics like shark cartilage and noni juice). Importantly, the potential role of all of these foods is discussed in the context of evidence provided by population-based trials and epidemiological data.

The chapter on polyunsaturated fatty acids provides an up-to-date reflection of the currently accepted hypothesis in the field, *i.e.* that prostaglandins and leukotrienes (lipid mediators of the cyclooxygenase and lipoxygenase pathways) formed from arachidonic acid have pro-inflammatory properties

whereas equivalent metabolites derived from eicosapentaenoic and docosahexaenoic acids (EPA and DHA, the highly polyunsaturated fatty acids that are enriched in fish oil) are considered to exert more anti-inflammatory effects. In the end, this may or may not turn out to be the correct explanation for the beneficial effects of fish oil, but it is what most current evidence and studies hint at.

The references on the individual chapters are up to date throughout the book, dating from the late 90ies to the early 2000s. All journal names are given in full, making it easy for the reader to find and access cited scientific work. There is also a concise 8-page glossary of terms and a helpful index.

I valued most of this book its scientific approach to such a complex question which gives the authors a lot of credibility for their presentation. Throughout the book, there is a clear recognition of how difficult it is to obtain hard evidence and meaningful data in population-based dietary studies. Furthermore, the book ends with a guide for interpreting statistical data, a reproduction of the “malnutrition universal screening tool”, and a four stage regimen of how to select and eliminate individual foods from the diet that may aggravate symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis in individual patients. This is all part of the approach to educate and guide readers without dominating their opinion.

This is a very informative and valuable compendium for everyone that is interested in understanding the complex interaction of nutrition and arthritis.

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