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Foods That Help Fight Pain!



By James Gruft M.D. Oct. 17 at 9:54 a.m.

After three years of back pain, failed surgery, and countless ineffective epidurals, this May Eric Awalt described himself as “a recluse, a living death.”

Today Eric does 500 sit-ups and walks fifty flights of stairs every day.

What finally transformed him? Chicago’s first comprehensive pain program that incorporates intense one-on-one physical therapy, stress management techniques, a customized care plan for every patient....and a special diet that helps relieve pain.

The 40-year-old Joliet area native now eats a raw foods diet: four-to-five small meals a day of lettuce, spinach, cabbage, kale, other vegetables like carrots, and nuts for protein. “When I started I felt less pain within days,” he says. “After a week I was on a bicycle for the first time in over two years.”

“Diet can be a treatment for pain,” says James Gruft M.D. founder of From Pain To Wellness in Oakbrook Terrace.. The nationally known board-certified pain specialist has authored a book, was formerly on staff at Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital, and has treated Chicago-area patients for two decades.

Dr. Gruft says, “A new diet is just one element of our program. However, that said, in 20 years of treating pain, I’ve never seen the kind of results I’m seeing now and it’s largely this added component of nutrition.”

The researcher had long noticed that his pain patients consistently ate junk food diets. He decided to test their blood nutritional levels. The results? Recurring deficiencies in Vitamin D, omega 3 fatty acids, B vitamins and amino acids. Patients in pain also had high levels of toxic metals. The specialist’s next step was to replace those deficiencies with patient-customized diets.

Those diets are now a key treatment in Dr. Gruft’s intense 21 day, 6-hour-a-day comprehensive pain program. The meals are actually catered by a Chicago gourmet restaurant called Cousins IV. A typical lunch consists of a salad of pumpkin seeds, walnuts, and olive oil, all served in a corn husk. All foods are raw, organic, and gluten free. In addition some patients receive FDA-designated “medical foods” for obesity, Type II diabetes, inflammation and other chronic conditions.

Within a few days Eric’s new diet, along with his other treatments, transformed his life. “The combined program did what surgery, injections, and other pain programs couldn’t,” he says. “I had less pain, was sleeping better, and losing weight. It all just turned me around.”

Five months later, Eric is still faithful to his new diet. Dr. Gruft says patients are rarely totally loyal to the strict regimen but most integrate more raw and “nutritional” foods into their daily diets.” Compliance hasn’t been that much of a problem,” he says, “because the diet works. I tell patients, ‘give this just diet three weeks and you’ll feel less daily pain’...and that’s exactly what happens.”

During his 21 days of treatment Eric went from walking 1000 to 15,000 steps every day. For that he largely credits 2-4 hours a day of grueling physical therapy. The one-on-one sessions were customized for his particular pain and tolerance level. “Everything was customized,” he says. “We’re all different, we have different kinds of pain, and we handle it in different ways. This center understood that.”

Dr. Gruft says a diet that relieves pain isn't just a new treatment; it's the beginning of a whole new paradigm for treating chronic pain. "Away," he says, "from generic interventions and toward a customized molecular and physiologic approach to pain."

"I was skeptical that my diet could really play a role in changing my pain," says Eric Awalt. "Now I believe in it 100-percent. I've emerged from a very dark place...and there's no question my new diet is a big reason why."

For more information you can contact From Pain To Wellness in Oakbrook Terrace at 630-627-7500 or www.frompaintowellness.com