

Autoimmune Paleo Diet: What Is It & What Are the Benefits of AIP?



From rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis to inflammatory bowel disease and multiple sclerosis, the prevalence of autoimmune conditions in the western world is soaring.

It seems modern medicine can only provide so many answers and that somewhere along the way, our diets and lifestyles started backfiring on our bodies.

What Is an Autoimmune Condition?

Your immune function is one of the most important things you possess. You might refer to it as your health.

A well respected immune system is able to fight against invading bacterial infections, protect from damaging toxins, and flush through visiting viruses.

When you contract a cold, your immune system is the reason your body is able to eventually alleviate its symptoms.

Sometimes your immune function can become compromised - stress is a very well-known factor for that. In this case, you may pick up colds more easily, feel run down consistently, and find it hard to recover from illness.

Other times your immune function can start to malfunction. In this situation, your body begins to see itself as a bacteria or virus. Instead of attacking the truly bad invaders, your body begins to attack its own healthy tissues.

The American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association estimate over 50 million Americans live with an autoimmune disease.

What Causes an Autoimmune Disease?

The exact trigger of autoimmune diseases is currently unknown. With all the different autoimmune conditions, their triggers are also different. There are, however, several contributing factors that are currently being researched -- diet and the effect of different food groups is one keen area of interest.

Your digestive system features several distinct stages; the most important of which happen in your gut, where your large and small intestine live. Once food reaches your gut, vitamins and minerals are able to be absorbed through your gut lining and into your bloodstream. This is how your body feeds itself.

A highly suspected trigger of many autoimmune diseases is leaky gut syndrome. This describes a condition where your gut has been compromised by a poor diet, and where the resulting damage and inflammation has compromised your intestinal wall.

From there, your body is unable to discriminate between helpful vitamins and unhelpful toxins. Portions of both are absorbed.

How a Paleo Diet Can Help

Autoimmunity

The principles of paleo are based on taking your diet back to its ancestral roots. Therefore whatever foods your ancestors ate millions of years ago are the foods our bodies have evolved to eat today. Feeding your body foods it's designed to use, plays well with your body's biology.

In a typical paleo diet, refined and processed foods such as sugar, premade meals, and vegetable oils are eliminated. If your ancestors weren't able to forage for it, it's on the paleo no-go list.

A paleo-style diet is thought to help improve autoimmune conditions by allowing the body time to repair. Foods such as alcohol and refined sugars are known to cause inflammation and can lead to leaky gut syndrome. Foods like grain-fed meats, farmed wheats, and potatoes would not have been freely available and therefore paleo dictates, our bodies have not fully evolved to tolerate and thrive from.

How Paleo and the Autoimmune Paleo Diet Differ

A traditional paleo diet still allows for some questionable foods to be eaten in small quantities. Foods that likely won't harm your body in small amounts, but may aggravate existing conditions.

In the autoimmune paleo diet, because the body is already in a state of compromise, these questionable food groups are also eliminated. Doing this allows your diet to become packed with foods known to provide many beneficial vitamins, minerals, and fats, allowing your gut time to heal from the questionable ones.

In addition to the basic principles of paleo, the autoimmune protocol also eliminates:

- **Dairy** - arguably a food group only part of the population have evolved to tolerate (questionable contents: lactose and casein proteins)
- **Nuts** - one of the most commonly suffered food sensitivities and

therefore eliminated on the autoimmune paleo diet to allow your gut time to recover.

- **Seeds** - as with nuts.
- **Grains** - because they contain lectin proteins that are implicated in disorders of the digestive system.
- **Legumes** - due to their saponin content, ingredients that behave like detergents and may, therefore, interact with your gut barrier.
- **Nightshade plants** - Plants like tomatoes, potatoes, red peppers, and eggplants contain both lectins and saponins that are easily able to negatively affect your gut lining.

After 3 to 4 weeks on an autoimmune paleo diet, you should see vast improvements. The elimination list can then be slowly re-introduced to trial the effects of different foods such as nuts or seeds.

Read more about the basics and benefits of a paleo diet [here](#).