

Popping pills for every ache is not a healthy idea. Learn

about these natural foods that will help ease the pain

7 FOODS THAT FIGHT PAIN

IT'S TRUE. The right foods can actually ease your aches. There is some grain of truth to the thought that the Indian diet does consist of powerful foods that help you deal with the aches way better. In those multicoloured foods lie powerful healers. Moreover, these natural foods would not cause those nasty side effects that drugs do. Recent research has suggested that some of the foods have as much pain-fighting power as common pain medications like ibuprofen.

"Foods can be a better choice as some pain-relief medicines are said to have ill-effects for some individuals. What we eat can actually have a dramatic impact

By **NALINI RAVICHANDRAN**

on the levels of pain in the body," says Dr Shivani Bajaj, New Delhi based internal medicine specialist. But also remember, that pain is a symptom of an underlying problem. "Pain can be eased by these foods but the root problem has to be treated as well," she adds. A diet that is rich in certain components helps too. "Foods which are rich in omega-3 fats, vitamin C, D and E are known to lower inflammation too. Unhealthy diet, increased calorie intake, consumption of trans-fats, sedentary lifestyle, excessive alcohol consumption and smoking, are strongly linked to inflammation," says Ishi Khosla, New Delhi based clinical nutritionist.

nalini.ravichandran@mailtooday.in

GINGER

GOOD FOR: Stomach aches, toothaches.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE: Ginger can be effectively used for a wide range of problems which include bacterial dysentery, asthma, tooth aches, stomach aches and ulcers, says a study done by the Botanical Medicine Academy, Washington. The rhizome in ginger contains 1-4% volatile oils, which are responsible for its pungent odour and taste, and also contain the medicinal constituents, according to the study.

EXPERT TAKE: "Ginger is an excellent anti-inflammatory agent and can be used to expel cold, stomach aches, tooth aches and relieve motion sickness too. Research has shown that ginger may provide migraine relief due



to its ability to stop inflammation in blood vessels. Due to its antispasmodic characteristic some people use it to help ease menstrual cramps," says Dr Neeraj Jain, senior consultant, Action Pain Clinic, Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute.

RIGHT WAY TO TAKE IT: Pack that health punch with a cup of ginger tea. You can also add it to sweet dishes like pumpkin pie or other milk based dishes.

TURMERIC

GOOD FOR: Joint pain.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE: Turmeric helps relieve the pain associated with inflammatory diseases that include arthritis, says a study done by researchers at the Department of Medicine, University of Kansas. Turmeric also helps in alleviating joint inflammation, researchers at the University of Arizona found.

EXPERT TAKE: "Turmeric has a unique power to fight the pain of rheumatoid arthritis as effectively as ibuprofen. It also seems to reduce the destruction of joints from arthritis. Turmeric contains an

antioxidant called curcumin. Its anti-inflammatory effects are on par with potent drugs such as hydrocortisone and motrin, yet having none of their side effects," says Ritika Samadhar, head, dietitian, Max Superspecialty Hospital.

RIGHT WAY TO TAKE IT: A hot cup of turmeric milk spiced up with black pepper, ginger, cardamom and saffron could be your cup of comfort all through the year. You can also add a generous punch of turmeric to a wide range of dishes.



CINNAMON

GOOD FOR: Headache, migraine.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE: Cinnamon does have medicinal properties, confirms a study done by the Department of Botany, Government College of Ooty. It can ease headaches and migraine. Toothaches are caused by the build-up of bacteria in the mouth, and cinnamon does have anti-microbial properties. Flavonoids present in cinnamon have strong anti-inflammatory properties.

EXPERT TAKE: "Cinnamon also has strong antioxidant properties to help prevent glycoxidation - damage to cells caused by high levels of blood glucose. This spice improves circulation, which helps avoid the pain caused by poor circulation. It also helps in preventing stomach ulcers, urinary tract and yeast infections, tooth decay and gum diseases," says Dr Neeraj Jain.

RIGHT WAY TO TAKE IT: It can be added to warm drinks like milk, tea and soups. You could also couple cinnamon with a high carb food as it lowers the blood sugar levels.

PAPAYA

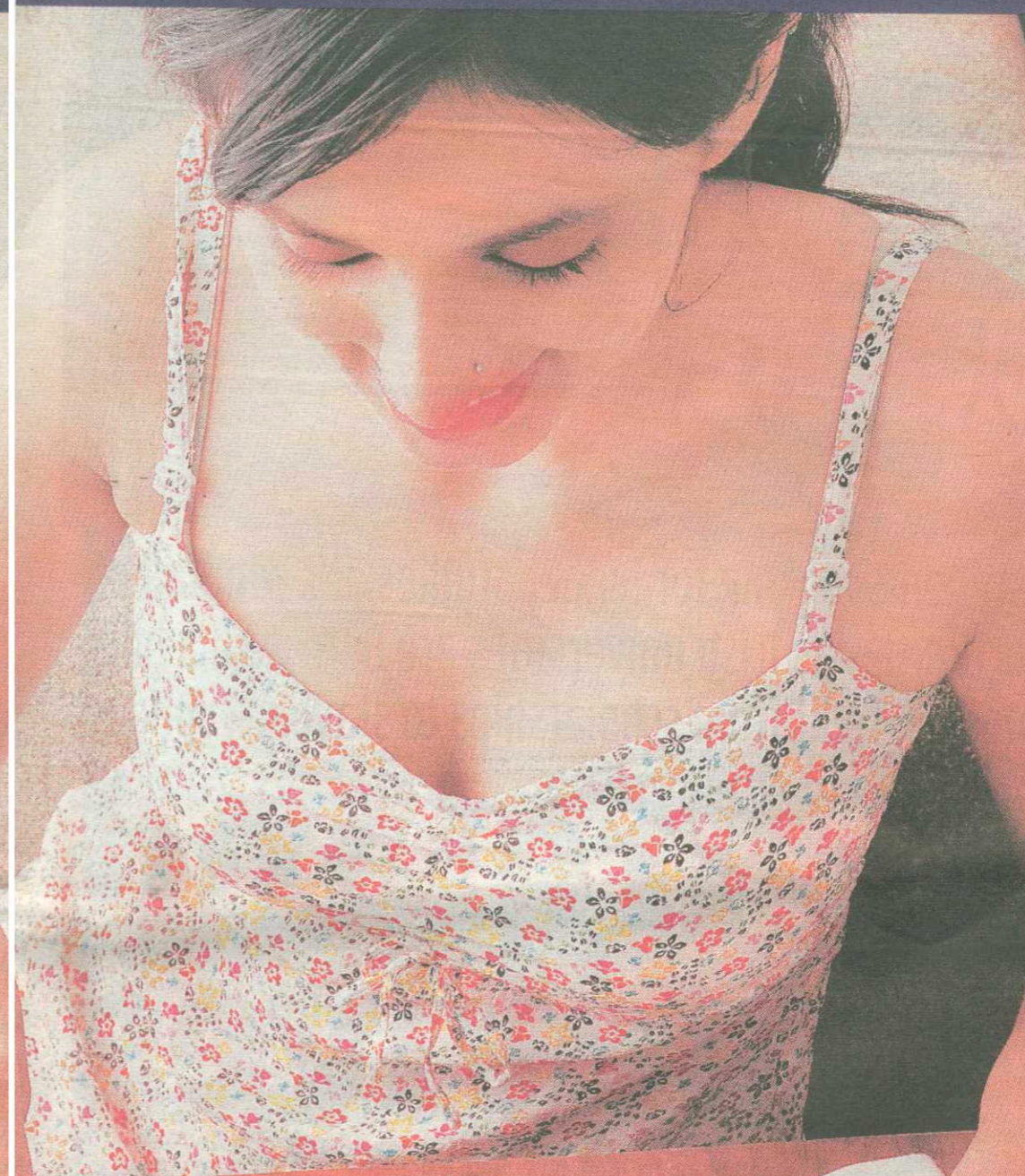
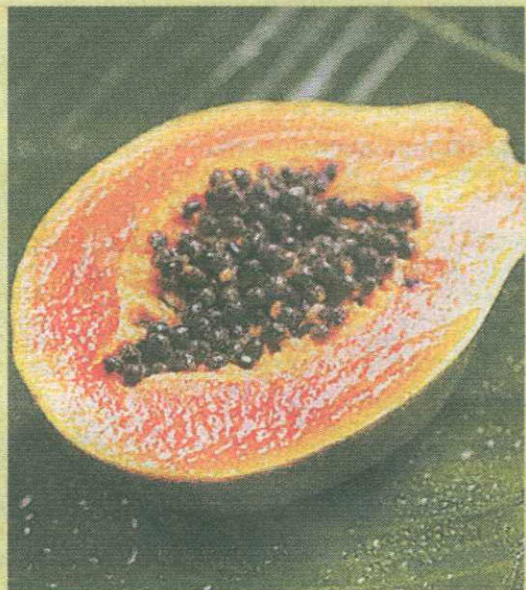
GOOD FOR: Ulcer related pain.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE: Proteolytic enzymes present in papaya have medicinal properties, says a study done by the NYU Langone Medical Centre in Manhattan. It contains papain and bromelain, which reduce inflammation and ease indigestion.

EXPERT TAKE: "Papaya contains papain a protein-digesting enzyme. Together with other nutrients such as vitamin C and E, papain helps reduce inflammation, and

improves digestion," says Shachi Sohal, dietitian, BLK Superspeciality Hospital. The enzyme in papaya is also an effective anti-inflammatory, proven to ease stings, burns, wounds, and postoperative pain.

RIGHT WAY TO TAKE IT: Diced papaya makes for a delicious fruit salad. Avoid going in for packaged drinks and processed food products in the market that claim to contain the fruit.



BROCCOLI

GOOD FOR: Chronic fatigue.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE: The anti-oxidants present in broccoli help hasten the speed of recovery in cases of inflammation, a study done by researchers at the University of Burlington, in Vermont says. Getting salicylic acid from food provides the same anti-inflammatory benefits as aspirin with absolutely no problems and broccoli is a very good source of salicylic acid, says another study published in the

British medical journal Lancet.

EXPERT TAKE: "Broccoli is a highly nutritious vegetable that contains anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer phytonutrients such as sulforaphane which help the body in getting rid of potentially carcinogenic compounds. It is also loaded with salicylic acid, the active pain-relieving ingredient in aspirin. SA reduces joint inflammation by inhibiting the production of prostaglandin hormones, which cause joint swelling and tenderness," says Dr Namita Nadar.

RIGHT WAY TO TAKE IT: The best way to have them is fresh. Go for broccoli salad with lemon juice squeezed over it. You can also have them steamed or add to the pasta.

GREEN TEA

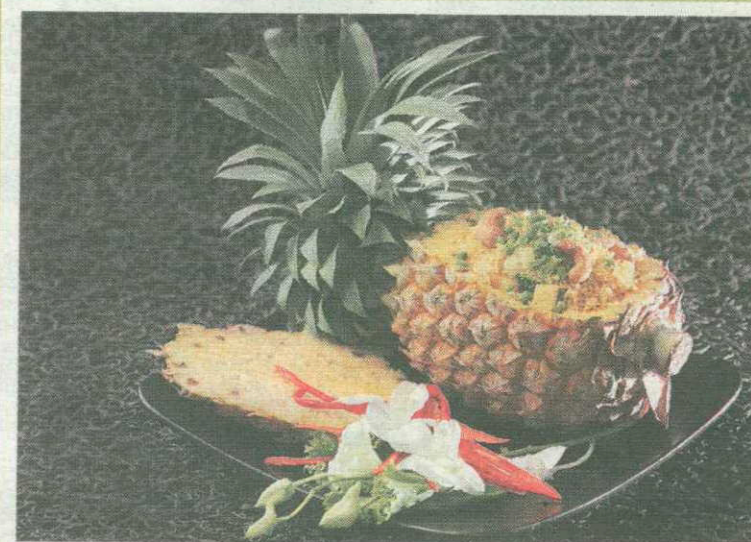
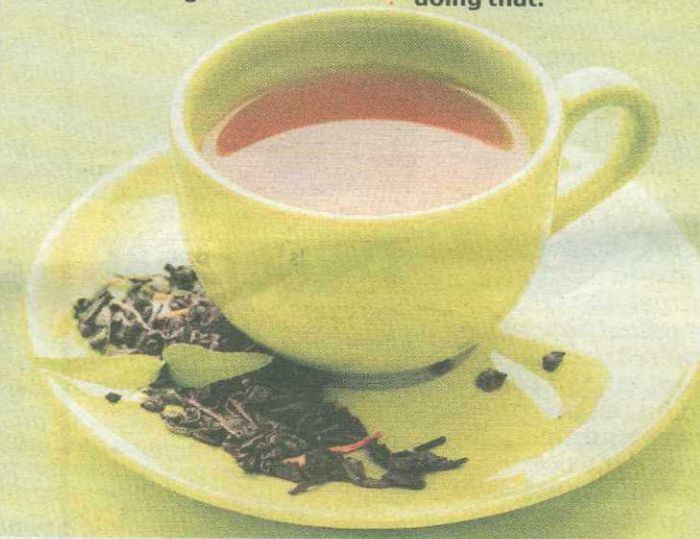
GOOD FOR: Muscle pain.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE: Green tea can alleviate the pain associated with arthritis and muscle pain, say researchers at the Centre for Disease Control. There's a potent compound found in green tea, EGCG, that's been shown to block the production of molecules that can damage cartilage and bone, so it can help alleviate arthritis pain.

EXPERT TAKE: "Green tea is great for stiff muscles—it has nine muscle-relaxing compounds, more than just about any other plant. The flavonoids in green tea are

potent natural anti-inflammatory compounds that reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer," says Dr Namita Nadar, clinical nutritionist, Fortis Hospital.

RIGHT WAY TO TAKE IT: Many people find green tea to be tasteless. But making it the right way can dispel such thoughts. A common mistake is brewing green tea using boiling water as it can end up the green tea being bitter and nasty. Ideally, the water should just simmer. Also, adding milk and sugar to green tea is generally not recommended as you negate the benefits of green tea by doing that.



PINEAPPLE

GOOD FOR: Pain from sprains, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE: Papaya contains bromelain, which has anti-inflammatory properties, says a study published in the journal Arthritis Today. An extract from its stem has been shown to act as an effective natural anti-inflammatory agent that reduces pain and swelling, improves joint mobility and promotes tissue repair. Bromelain also activates the immune cells that help fight the infection, the study found.

EXPERT TAKE: "It contains bromelain an enzyme that aids in digestion and extracts of bromelain have been shown in many studies to be effective. It is also used in many natural anti-

inflammatory supplements of arthritis," says Shachi Sohal. Bromelain is an enzyme that aids in the healing of indigestion, sports injury, trauma and other kinds of swelling. Extracts of bromelain have also proven to be as effective as some non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

RIGHT WAY TO TAKE IT: You could make fresh juice squeezed out of pineapple or just have cut pieces of the fruit. Yet again, stay away from those drinks and foods in the supermarket aisles which boast of pineapple benefits. Pineapples can also be included in baked cakes and muffins. Slices or chunks of fresh pineapple can be quick healthy snacks too as its a rich source of many vital vitamins and minerals.