

The foods we eat affect our health in many ways, for better or for worse. Fruits and vegetables are beneficial foods that provide our bodies with energy and essential nutrients. Processed junk foods, such as cookies, potato chips and sugary sodas, are devoid of nutrients and, in large amounts, potentially harmful to our bodies no matter our age or current health.

However, when a person faces a potentially debilitating chronic disease such as scleroderma, in which fatigue, digestive difficulties and nutrient deficiencies are common, a high quality, nutritious diet must take center stage to enhance quality of life and successful management of symptoms.

There is no specific scleroderma diet since symptoms and the severity of the disease vary so greatly in each person. Establishing a balanced diet that emphasizes foods that fight inflammation and provide energy, protein, vitamins and minerals is paramount.

Tips to avoid fatigue in scleroderma patients:

- Eat small, frequent meals to provide continuous energy and keep blood sugar from dipping too low.
- Increase fluid intake.
- Participate in 30 to 60 minutes of moderate daily exercise such as walking, bike riding, pool exercise, Pilates, yoga or Tai chi.
- Sleep for seven to eight hours each night.

If iron levels are low, which is typical of someone with chronic disease, discuss additional iron supplementation with your doctor. If you currently take an iron pill, take it with juice containing vitamin C to allow for better absorption.

