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Review Article

# The Potential Role of Potassium Supplementation in Managing Pain for Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients: Insights from a Study in Pune, India

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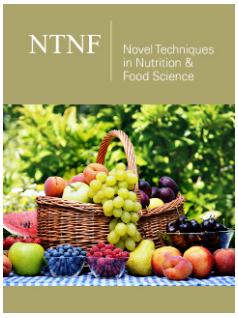
**ISSN: 2640-9208**

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**Submission:** November 11, 2024

**Published:** February 26, 2025

Volume 8 - Issue 2

**How to cite this article:** Toktam Kianifard* and Arvind Chopra. The Potential Role of Potassium Supplementation in Managing Pain for Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients: Insights from a Study in Pune, India. Nov Tech Nutri Food Sci. 8(2). NTNF. 000684. 2025.
DOI: 10.31031/NTNF.2025.08.000684



## Abstract

Debilitating pain and joint degeneration are hallmarks of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) a chronic inflammatory disease. A multifaceted strategy that includes medication, lifestyle changes and dietary considerations is frequently required for effective management. A recent study carried out in Pune, India, shows promise for future research by highlighting the possible advantages of potassium supplementation in reducing pain for RA patients. The four-month study, which was designed as a randomized double-blind experiment, featured 174 registered RA patients at a specialized center. One set of participants followed a regular diet, the second group followed a regular diet supplemented with potassium and the third group received standard care while continuing to take their prescribed medications. This methodical technique sought to evaluate, under supervision, how dietary potassium affected pain levels. According to the findings, the potassium-augmented diet group's pain levels were much lower than those of the regular diet group. These results provide credence to the idea that dietary interventions, particularly those high in potassium, can be beneficial adjuncts to conventional RA therapy. According to [1] "nutritional factors play a critical role in managing chronic inflammatory diseases and potassium's potential in modulating pain response warrants further exploration" [2].

**Keywords:** Potassium supplementation; Pain management; Joint pain; Inflammation; Anti-inflammatory effects; Pain reduction; Pain relief; Rheumatic disease

## Introduction

Potassium's engagement in numerous physiological systems may be the reason for its positive effects. Potassium is essential for nerve and muscle signaling, both of which are critical for preserving joint health. Moreover, potassium's effect on cortisol levels may be important in controlling inflammation, which would help reduce pain. They point out that "the anti-inflammatory properties of potassium-rich foods may improve outcomes for patients with inflammatory conditions". Potassium can be found in an abundance of fruits and vegetables, providing a convenient and safe alternative for individuals who want to improve their dietary intake without the dangers of medication. In addition to having high potassium content, foods like bananas, spinach, avocados and sweet potatoes also include vital vitamins and minerals that promote general health. This nutritional strategy encourages patients to actively participate in their own health management, which is in line with holistic health ideals. RA patients can improve their health in a supportive, natural way by including foods high in potassium in their diets.

## Background and Rationale

The significance of potassium in dietary health is extensively recognized; however, its function in the management of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) has not been thoroughly investigated.

Prior studies, including the (National Health and Nutrition Survey III, 1988-1994), revealed a considerable prevalence of hypokalemia among individuals with RA. [3] Additionally, a recent study from India has brought attention to potassium deficiencies in this demographic, raising important questions regarding nutritional health and its effects on disease management. A noteworthy clinical trial carried out in Iran found that potassium supplementation resulted in a marked decrease in pain for women diagnosed with seropositive RA. This finding implies that potassium may have a role in alleviating RA symptoms, potentially through mechanisms such as enhanced cortisol levels, which are vital for managing inflammation and pain sensitivity. The research conducted in Pune adds significant evidence to the growing understanding of the potential advantages of potassium in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis. Patients who adopted a potassium-enriched diet experienced considerable reductions in pain compared to those on a conventional diet. These results strongly advocate for the consideration of dietary modifications particularly those high in potassium as a beneficial adjunct to standard RA therapies.

### Pain management

The positive impact of potassium on pain relief in patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) can be linked to various physiological processes. Studies indicate that potassium is vital for muscle performance, nerve communication and inflammation control, all of which are critical for maintaining joint health. For example, sufficient potassium levels are connected to improved hydration and electrolyte balance, potentially alleviating swelling and discomfort in the joints [4]. Additionally, potassium may influence cortisol regulation, which could enhance the body's stress response and reduce inflammation, thereby aiding in pain management [5].

### Dietary interventions as complementary strategies

The results of the Pune study support the idea that modifications in diet can significantly contribute to the overall management of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA). Incorporating foods high in potassium into their diets may provide patients with symptom relief that enhances their current treatment plans. This comprehensive strategy recognizes the multifaceted nature of RA and promotes a holistic perspective on health care, highlighting the critical role of lifestyle and nutritional elements in managing the disease [6].

### Safe and accessible sources of potassium

Fruit and vegetables serve as excellent sources of potassium, providing a safe and readily available option for individuals aiming to improve their nutritional intake. Items such as bananas, sweet potatoes, spinach, avocados and oranges are rich in potassium and deliver vital vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that contribute to overall well-being [7]. This dietary strategy is especially advantageous for patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), who may face gastrointestinal challenges or side effects from medications that render traditional treatments less manageable. Integrating potassium-rich foods into everyday meals not only enhances nutritional health but also carries a reduced risk of negative side effects compared to pharmaceutical solutions. In contrast to certain medications that may cause adverse reactions and potential dependency, making dietary adjustments provides a natural and supportive approach to improving patient health [8].

### Aligning with holistic health principles

Encouraging diets high in potassium is consistent with holistic health principles that emphasize the interrelation of physical, mental and emotional wellness. By guiding patients towards healthier dietary choices, healthcare professionals can support a more integrated strategy for managing Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA). This approach highlights the importance of self-care and lifestyle changes in enhancing health outcomes [9].

### Encouraging active participation in health management

Promoting the inclusion of potassium-rich foods in patients' diets enables them to actively participate in managing their health. This change in patient involvement can enhance compliance with dietary guidelines and foster a greater sense of control over their treatment. When patients engage in selecting foods that benefit their health, they tend to feel more committed to their treatment plans, resulting in better health outcomes [10].

## Discussion

This study highlights a good relationship between clinical therapy of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) and nutritional measures. Since joint deterioration and crippling pain are the main symptoms of RA, a comprehensive treatment strategy is essential. The Pune study's findings, which indicate that patients who followed a potassium-augmented diet received significant pain alleviation in comparison to those on a regular diet, offer important insight into the potential role potassium supplementation may play as an adjuvant to conventional RA treatments. This discovery contributes to a growing body of evidence indicating that dietary factors can have a significant influence on chronic inflammatory disorders, such as RA. Efficacy variables of patients suffering from RA on standard of care treatment in intervention and control group (A; K rich diet, B; K rich diet+dietary K suppl C; routine diet): showing mean change over study period (16 weeks) The data on pain VAS in (Table 1) was further analyzed using Kruskal-Walis rank sum test (nonparametric test). There was no baseline difference in mean pain VAS by treatment Arms (p=0.92). on completion the difference in mean pain VAS by treatment Arms was statistically significant(p=0.03); the best response (mean pain VAS3.2±1.7SD) was seen in Arm B. Further, when mean change in pain VAS over study period (16 weeks) was considered, the difference between the intervention arms was significant (p=0.05); the mean change (2.24±2 SD) was maximum (pain relief) in Arm B. ACR 20 index improvement response is at least 20% improvement each in joint count for pain/tenderness and joint count for swelling and 20% improvement in any 3 of the following 5 measures; pain VAS, patient global assessment, physician global assessment, HAQ and ESR . On comparison there was no significance difference between the study Arms using completer analysis except for a significant improvement in pain relief (pain VAS) (p=0.03) in Arm B. Potassium's physiological significance in pain reduction

may be attributed to its functions in inflammatory regulation and muscle and nerve transmission. Potassium's ability to modulate pain and inflammation may also be explained by its role in cortisol modulation, which affects the body's stress response. The finding supports previous Iranian research showing that potassium supplementation significantly reduced RA patients' suffering. All these findings support the idea that dietary potassium may affect inflammatory pathways associated with pain sensitivity, which makes it a worthwhile area for further investigation.

**Table 1:**

| Variable | A(n=57) | | B(n=58) | | C(n=57) | | P* ANOVA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Baseline | Mean Change | Baseline | Mean Change | Baseline | Mean Change | |
| Pain VAS (0-100mm) | 5.42 | -1.31 (-1.93, -0.7) | 5.41 | -1.98 (-2.62, -1.34) | 5.26 | -1.24 (-1.8, -0.67) | 0.17 |

These findings' wider ramifications suggest that nutritional interventions are safe, accessible and efficient alternatives to conventional pharmaceutical treatments. Incorporating foods high in potassium, such as sweet potatoes, avocados, spinach and bananas, may help RA patients experience more symptom alleviation without the dangers of using medication. This is especially important because RA drugs can have negative side effects and patients may experience gastrointestinal issues that make taking their meds more difficult. Therefore, a diet high in potassium offers a possibly safer substitute that is consistent with holistic health concepts, highlighting the body's innate resilience and self-regulating abilities. Furthermore, RA management that prioritizes diet supports holistic health and encourages patients to actively participate in their own care. Patients frequently feel more in control of their health when they actively participate in dietary changes, which improve treatment outcomes and compliance. Better long-term control of RA symptoms may result from this move toward patient-centered care, where lifestyle changes are incorporated into conventional medical procedures.

## Conclusion

The Pune study highlights the potential benefits of potassium supplementation in managing pain for patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA). By encouraging dietary changes that emphasize the inclusion of potassium-rich fruits and vegetables, healthcare professionals can foster a more comprehensive and empowering strategy for RA treatment. As ongoing research delves into the therapeutic advantages of dietary approaches, incorporating nutritional factors into treatment plans may offer novel solutions that improve the quality of life for individuals affected by rheumatoid arthritis. Incorporating nutritional strategies into RA treatment could change how healthcare providers approach this complex disease as our understanding of dietary impacts on chronic conditions grows. This study showcases the potential of potassium supplementation as a helpful adjunct to conventional RA therapy, opening the door for further research to explore the mechanisms through which potassium may reduce pain and inflammation.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Center for Rheumatic Diseases in Pune, India, for their invaluable support and resources throughout the course of this study. I am especially grateful to the director of the center, clinical staff and research coordinators whose expertise and dedication enabled the successful recruitment, monitoring and management of study participants. Their commitment to advancing research in rheumatoid arthritis has been instrumental in making this study possible. Additionally, I extend my heartfelt thanks to all the study participants, whose involvement and cooperation made this research feasible and meaningful.

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