

Reduce Painful Inflammation with Better Nutrition

Medium Health

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Inflammation is a vague term, describing a medical condition that can affect virtually any part of your body. If you suffer from pain or discomfort that you think could be related to your diet, read on for some important pointers and tips for reducing inflammation through good nutrition.

What is Inflammation?

A broad term, inflammation is defined as: “a local response to cellular injury that is marked by capillary dilatation, leukocytic infiltration, redness, heat, pain, swelling, and often loss of function and that serves as a mechanism initiating the elimination of noxious agents and of damaged tissue.”

In plain English, it's swelling as a result of fluid leaking into tissues. Inflammation is a normal immune response in the body, and it's not always a bad thing. In the short term, localized inflammation indicates that your body's immune system is attempting to fight off an infection or heal an injury. But when it kicks into overdrive and doesn't go away, it becomes known as chronic inflammation.

What are the Most Common Symptoms of Inflammation?

- Swollen joints
- Joint pain and stiffness
- Loss of joint function
- Skin warmth and/or redness

The condition can be difficult to detect, especially if you have diabetes or heart disease. But if it's not treated, it can lead to a heart attack or stroke. Chronic low-grade inflammation also leads to weight gain.

What Role Does Diet Play?

Your food choices play a key role in whether or not you develop inflammation. You can become trapped in a vicious cycle: Poor diet and/or obesity enable inflammation, which then causes further weight gain and other health problems.

Ten types of food that can cause inflammation:

1. **Sugar**—From juices and baked goods to sauces and condiments, it's become increasingly difficult to find foods without sugar in them!
 2. **Vegetable Oils**—Have “a high concentration of the inflammatory fat, omega-6, and are low in the anti-inflammatory fat, omega-3.”
 3. **Fried Foods**—Frying at high temperatures only compounds the damage done by using vegetable oil.
 4. **Refined Flour**—Pizza, pasta, and many other favorites made with this ingredient are known for spiking blood sugar levels.
 5. **Dairy Products**—Milk, butter, and soft cheeses do the most damage. Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to consume a lot of dairy in order to meet your calcium requirements.
 6. **Artificial Sweeteners**—It's hard to find anything positive to say about the ingredients in “diet” drinks and low or no-calorie products.
 7. **Artificial Additives**—More artificial ingredients? Yuck. Food coloring and emulsifiers are just two things to watch out for when reading those foods labels.
 8. **Saturated Fats**—Chips, candy, and other fatty snacks all contain saturated fats. They're not typically called “junk foods” for nothing.
 9. **Conventional Meat**—Occasionally eating meat (including steak, chicken, and pork) is not necessarily bad, especially if you could use some extra protein and iron. But nutritionists suggest choosing organic or grass-fed meats, which are better for you than grain-fed.
 10. **Processed Meats**—In general, the less processed a food item is, the better it is for you. Bacon, hot dogs, and most deli meats contain both saturated fat and inflammatory compounds. Artificial colors and preservatives add insult to injury.
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If it seems like all of your favorite foods are off-limits, don't lose heart! A well-known, and effective eating plan, is the Mediterranean Diet. Nutritionists agree that the typical fare of this area of the world tends to lead to the best health and longevity.

What are a Few Recommended Mediterranean Diet Foods?

While it's wise to follow the "everything in moderation" philosophy, there are virtually no limits on the amounts of these foods that you can, and should, enjoy.

Fruits: blueberries, apples, oranges

Vegetables: red peppers, broccoli, cauliflower

Legumes: beans, peas, lentils

Grains: raw oats, quinoa, barley

Proteins: wild salmon, tuna, chicken

If you suffer from inflammation, take some time to record and analyze your diet. Improving your overall lifestyle can help you avoid many inflammation-related medical issues.