

The Anti-Inflammation Diet for Chronic Diseases

There is an abundance of scientific evidence to support the healing power of healthy foods. A common element in most chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, high blood pressure, Alzheimer's disease and cancer is "chronic inflammation". This would include inflamed organs, blood vessels, brain tissue and joints. Chronic inflammation can be caused by stress, injured tissue, and by eating foods that promote inflammation or not including an abundance of anti-inflammatory foods in the diet.

Most of us have heard that abdominal fat is worse for you than hip and thigh fat. Specifically, when someone carries a lot of extra weight around their waist, a lot of it is on the inside, around our abdominal organs. These abdominal fat cells, or adipocytes, are not just sitting there being fat! They are metabolically active, especially when they are over-nourished. This can cause them to act like injured tissue, and release a lot of damaging hormones, like tumor necrosis factor, IL-6 and free radicals. These hormones can cause tissue damage elsewhere in the body, like the inside of your blood vessels, as one example. So, the anti-inflammation diet should also include increased efforts to reduce belly fat—e.g. weight loss!

Some foods in particular stimulate this inflammatory reaction throughout the body. Others tend to turn the inflammation off and help repair the damage. Here are general guidelines on pro and anti-inflammatory foods:

Foods that Promote Inflammation: Keep these Limited

Damaged fats --Trans fats (hydrogenated fats) found in prepared foods & margarines (check labels), meats grilled or broiled on high heat, fried foods and refined oils.

Fructose -- found in table sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, agave syrup, fruit juices (limit to ½ cup per day). Fruit is FINE!

High glycemic index foods -- Foods made from flour or other ground up grains, white rice and white potatoes

Anti-Inflammatory Diet: Eating Tips

Vegetables & Fruits

- Say "vegetables and fruits" instead of "fruits and vegetables" to put emphasis on plant foods *the more colorful the better!
- Eat plenty of cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, etc.)
- Consider organic when possible
- Eat in-season whole fruits
- Limit Juice intake (1/2 cup per day)
- All berries are SUPER foods!
- Don't forget to include all squashes & sweet potatoes

Other Carbohydrates

- Whole and cracked grains (you should be able to see the grains—limit foods made from any grain flours)
- Pastas (Occasional; cook al dente, just until tender)
- Add vinegar to dishes, it lowers glycemic load.
- Include soy in the forms of edamame, tofu, and tempeh
- Beans, lentils, quinoa and barley will help you feel full!

Fats

- Omega-3 (from fish, flax or chia seeds)

- Raw unroasted nuts & seeds & nut butters
- Extra virgin olive oil or other unrefined oils
- Avocados

Proteins (limit servings of animal products)

- Choose fish rich in omega-3 fats, including wild Alaskan salmon, herring, sardines and black cod
- Grass fed animals & dairy
- Legumes (Anasazi beans, adzuki beans, black beans, chickpeas, black-eyed peas & lentils)
- Almonds and Walnuts (raw is better than roasted)
- Asian mushrooms (maitake, shitake, wild)
- High quality dairy & eggs & cheese

Spices, Beverages, & Sweets

- Season food with turmeric, curry powder, ginger, garlic, chili peppers, cinnamon, and other herbs & spices.
- Tea is a great alternative for coffee (green, oolong or black tea)
- Limited alcohol intake (1-2 servings a day) *Red wine is best choice.
- Dark chocolate (minimum cocoa content of 70%)