

## INFLAMMATION AND DIET

In recent years, the importance of inflammation as a cause of atherosclerosis, coronary artery disease, heart attack and stroke have become widely known. An under-utilized test by doctors is the hs-CRP (high sensitivity C Reactive Protein) which is a marker for inflammation in the body and is recognized as many authorities to be the single most important risk factor for heart attacks and stroke. Additionally, Alzheimer's, chronic pain, arthritis and other chronic diseases are worsened or caused by too much inflammation. Rather than take drugs to decrease inflammations with their many side effects, it is better to use foods, nutrients and herbs to reduce it.

### Inflammatory Foods

Pro-inflammatory foods will increase inflammation, increase your pain and may also raise your risk for chronic disease. Loading up on junk foods, high-fat meats, sugar and fast foods will increase inflammation in your body. This is partially due to the unhealthy fats used in preparing and processing these foods, especially trans fats and saturated fats. Processed meats such as lunch meats, hot dogs and sausages contain chemicals such as nitrites that are associated with increased inflammation and chronic disease.

Saturated fats are also found in meats, dairy products and eggs. While all of these foods are important source of minerals and vitamins, you don't need the extra saturated fat. These foods also contain fatty acids called arachidonic acid. While some arachidonic acid is essential for your health, too much arachidonic acid in the diet may make your inflammation worse. Be sure to choose low fat milk and cheese (if eaten at all!) and lean cuts of hormone-free meat, which will not promote inflammation.

Diets high in sugar have also been associated with inflammation, obesity and chronic disease such as diabetes. Eliminate high sugar foods such as sodas, soft drinks, pastries, presweetened cereals and candy.

Another possible source of irritation comes from the nightshade family of vegetables. Whole fruits and vegetables are important to eat for their vitamins, minerals, and natural antioxidants; however some vegetables like potatoes, tomatoes, and eggplant may actually make pain from inflammation worse. These vegetables are part of the nightshade family of plants and contain a chemical alkaloid called solanine. Solanine can trigger pain in some people. While there aren't any formal research findings that back the claim about nightshade plants, you can avoid them for a few weeks to see if your pain and symptoms of inflammation improve.

### Choose Anti-inflammatory Foods!!

Adding foods that reduce inflammation will improve how you feel and help to decrease your risk for chronic diseases. Here are some suggestions. Gingerroot, turmeric, cold-water fish, pineapple, berries, soy products, green tea, garlic and onions all have anti-inflammatory effects.

### Fats and Oils

The right types of fats in your diet will impact pain and inflammation in a positive way. Omega-3 essential fatty acids are very powerful anti-inflammatory agents. They are found in cold water oily fish, walnuts, flax seeds, canola oil and pumpkin seeds. Adding omega-3 fatty acid supplements from flax oil or fish oil may also help reduce inflammation. In general, use unheated, cold pressed, unrefined oils and take a distilled high potency fish oil supplement (purified and free of mercury and

toxins.) Olive oil is another type of oil that will reduce inflammation. In fact, olive oil has been shown to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, and will help to reduce pain.

## **Protein**

Your body needs protein to build healthy body tissues. Good protein sources include lean poultry, fish (avoid large fish like tuna due to mercury) and seafood, nuts, legumes and seeds. Red meats may trigger inflammation, so cut back on fatty red meats. When you do eat red meat, choose lean cuts of bison, venison and other game meats, or the lowest-fat cuts of beef, preferably grass-fed hormone free beef.

Soybeans, tofu, and soy milk are three great sources of soy proteins that may help to reduce your pain and inflammation.

## **Carbohydrates and Fiber**

Most of your carbohydrates should come from whole grains, vegetables and fruits. The bread, cereal and pasta in your diet should mostly be 100 percent whole grain products. Whole grains are excellent sources of fiber, and a high fiber diet will reduce your inflammation.

Choose green leafy vegetables, green and brightly colored vegetables and lots of fresh whole fruits. You should eat at least five and preferably more servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Green vegetables and whole fruits are also important as sources of dietary fiber and magnesium both of which lower CRP.

Berries are also a great food choice, especially blueberries and strawberries which are packed with anti-inflammatory phytochemicals and anti-oxidants. The pigments in brightly colored fruits, vegetables and berries contain many phytochemicals that have anti-inflammatory properties. One example is quercetin, which is found in apple and red onion skins and has strong anti-inflammatory properties.

## **Healthy Beverages**

Your body needs water in the form of foods and beverages every day. The simplest and maybe best form of water is fresh drinking water. Other good fluid sources include 100 percent fruit juices, herbal teas, vegetable juices and low fat milk. About 20 percent of the water you need every day will come from the foods you eat.

## **"Food Allergies"**

Some people believe that allergic-like reactions to food may increase inflammation and pain. These types of "food allergies" may make pain and inflammation worse. The underlying problem may be due to faulty digestion or excessive consumption of any particular food. Most any food that is consumed more than four days a week can be suspected as a possible allergen, but some of the more common allergic foods are milk and dairy, wheat, corn, eggs, yeast and soy. Even healthy foods can cause problems if you are sensitive to them. There are blood tests that can be performed, or elimination diets that can be undertaken to determine the problem foods.

## Anti-inflammatory Diet Tips

Over all, when you are choosing anti-inflammatory foods to help reduce your inflammation and pain, choose fresh foods instead of heavily processed foods. Here are some tips:

- Breakfast could be oatmeal served with fresh berries and walnuts, with a cup of soy milk.
- Snack on whole fruits, nuts, seeds, and fresh vegetables throughout the day instead of cookies and candy.
- Eat more fish and less fatty red meat.
- Stay away from deep fried foods and bake or stir fry your meals instead.
- Choose green, orange, and yellow vegetables for your side dishes.
- Drink plenty of water, fresh 100 percent fruit and vegetable juices, herbal teas and green tea.
- Supplement with a distilled fish oil, curcumin (active ingredient in turmeric) or turmeric, vitamin E (natural form only with mixed tocopherols), ginger root (fresh, caps or tea.)
- Lastly, ask your doctor to order a 'hs-CRP' (also called a cardiac CRP) to assess your risk of heart attack and stroke and other chronic diseases.