



# cooling down inflammation

Currently, many people are experiencing stress on a daily basis due to these times of economic uncertainty. One very undesirable side effect of chronic stress is increased inflammation within the body.

During emotional or physical stress, your brain releases a hormone called cortisol as an anti-inflammatory response. This short-term response is beneficial; however, when it happens too often, it can become harmful. Cortisol causes excess glucose and fatty acids to surge into the bloodstream for energy as part of the body's fight-or-flight response. In a state of chronic anxiety, excess cortisol lingers in the bloodstream, increasing blood sugar and cholesterol levels. As a result, the body will store excess fat. All of these factors combined contribute to chronic inflammation.

People who have existing health problems such as arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, inflammatory bowel disease, and certain skin conditions may have their symptoms exacerbated by inflammation. You may not always be able to avoid stress, but you can consume foods that may alleviate inflammation, and you can avoid foods that intensify the problem.

#### **FOODS THAT INCREASE INFLAMMATION:**

- Limit sugar and refined carbohydrates (starches primarily made with white flour). These foods cause a surge in blood sugar levels followed by a sudden drop. In addition to increasing inflammation, these foods have very little nutritional value.
- Avoid saturated and trans fats. Saturated fats are found in meats, whole milk dairy products, and fried foods. Trans fats are typically found in processed foods such as chips, cakes, and cookies.
- Limit omega-6 fatty acids, mostly found in hydrogenated vegetable oils.

#### **ANTI-INFLAMMATORY FOODS:**

- Omega-3 fatty acids. These are found in fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, halibut, and cod, and are also found in walnuts and flaxseed. Fish oil is the best supplement for omega-3 fatty acid that may be taken in pill form. Aim for about 1,000mg per day. This "good fat" will not only reduce inflammation but it is a powerful antioxidant, beneficial for the brain, heart, skin, hair, and nails.
- Cherries. What a perfect time of year to enjoy this antioxidant-rich fruit.
- Soy products

- Lycopene, found in cooked tomatoes, watermelon, pink grapefruit, papaya.
- Turmeric, a spice typically found in Indian foods.
- Vegetables such as bell peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, brussel sprouts, kale spinach, sweet potatoes.
- Fuel up on fiber and protein foods. Fiber found in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and beans, combined with protein, helps regulate blood sugar levels.

Wondering if inflammation is wreaking havoc on your body? There are blood value indicators, CRP (C-reactive protein) and interleukin-6. But don't run to your doctor just yet...these markers will not pinpoint specific causes of inflammation. Some inflammatory responses may be a result of a cold, sprained ankle, arthritis, stomach or headache, etc.

The most important factor to reduce inflammation is to maintain a healthy weight. Excess body fat alone increases inflammation, as well as putting you at a higher risk for many diseases. Following a healthy diet, exercising, and working on ways to reduce stress are the long-term solutions to better health.

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