

The Anti-Inflammatory Diet (You Are What You Eat!)

When we hear the term, "anti-inflammatory," many Americans think of drugs, pills, and injections. What is a pro-inflammatory substance? What might we unwittingly be doing that's compromising our health? Can we reduce inflammation, naturally? Here are some facts and tips, courtesy of the Unified Virginia Chiropractic Association.

Excessive inflammation can cause a number of problems, including (1) pain, (2) disuse and related mis-patterning that can predispose to future injury, and (3) risk of chronic inflammation. Normal people do not enjoy pain for pain's sake, so we commonly seek out ways to reduce pain. Cold therapy (cryotherapy) is a natural choice, yet many seek out pain-killing drugs such as aspirin, Ibuprofen, Cox-II inhibitors, and steroids. The risks of commonly-used anti-inflammatory and pain medications are considerable.² Doctors of chiropractic (DCs) are trained in natural methods to address inflammation while balancing inflammation's inherent value to healing. Furthermore, DCs will help tissues recover, fast, using hands-on methods designed to maximize short-term and long-term function. But what if your own dietary choices are working against you?

Just like anti-inflammatory drugs combat the inflammatory cycle, pro-inflammatory substances in our diet can predispose our bodies towards inflammation.³ Historically, our (human) diet favored a relatively even balance of fats (fatty acids) called Omega 3s and Omega 6s. We can tolerate a 4:1 Omega-6:Omega-3 ratio, but the modern diet tends towards 10:1 or even far worse. These Omega-6 fatty acids are very easily converted to something called prostaglandin E2, which is one of the very same substances certain anti-inflammatory drugs are designed to inhibit, i.e., prostaglandin E2 is pro-(promoting) inflammation. Inflammation plays a role not only in pain and injury, but also in heart disease, cancer, and other diseases. Doesn't it seem futile to eat fats that ramp up inflammation, only to take drugs to combat the effects of our diet -- and then have to take other drugs to combat the short-term and long-term effects and diseases those anti-inflammatory drugs cause?

The tables below will help you and your family make healthy, informed choices. Also, remember to limit raw sugar and high glycemic-index foods⁴ that can inherently ramp up inflammation and disease. A diet must be healthy and balanced, not consisting exclusively of fats (regardless of how healthy they might otherwise be), protein, carbohydrate, or any other substance. Please consider what foods you choose for yourself (and your family) at the dinner table, at the restaurant, and at the grocery store. Your body will thank you... and reward you, amply.

Sources of Omega-6 Fatty Acids ("Bad Fat"):

- All grains
- Cereals
- Flour products
- Most processed packaged foods
- Soybean oil, peanut oil, corn oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil, and cottonseed oil
- Grain- and corn-fed domestic meat and eggs from unfit and/or obese animals

Sources of Omega-3 Fatty Acids ("Healthy Fat"):

- Most fruits and vegetables
- Kale
- Swiss Chard
- Chicory
- Collard Greens
- Most oily fish
- Omega-3 eggs
- Meat, chicken, and eggs from grass-fed, fit animals

In a future article, we will explore anti-inflammatory herbs and foods. In the meantime, eat well -- and live well! If you are interested in living to your full potential -- and to aging gracefully -- ask your chiropractor for guidance. Find a highly trained chiropractor on-line at www.virginiachiropractic.org; or call the Unified Virginia Chiropractic Association at 540-932-3100.

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¹ Conservative Management of Sports Injuries. Hyde, Thomas E. DC; Gengenbach, Marianne S., DC, Editors. Williams & Wilkins, 1997. Pg. 701.

² See *Celebrate Wellness!*, Vol I, number 1.

³ See resources and references at www.deflame.com. Special thanks to Dr. David Seaman for his contributions to the field of anti-inflammatory nutrition.

⁴ High glycemic index: White bread, Pasta, Rice, Low-fiber cereals, Baked goods. Low glycemic index foods: Fruits, Vegetables, Whole and minimally processed grains, Legumes. SO: <http://diabetes.webmd.com/glycemic-index-good-versus-bad-carbs>.

