

Are there fireworks in our bodies?

Fight the flames with foods

Debbie Lucus, MS, RD, CDE

07.05.22

dlucusrd@gmail.com



Hot off the Press: Most Americans have sub-optimal heart health

[Status of Cardiovascular Health in US Adults and Children Using the American Heart Association's New "Life's Essential 8" Metrics: Prevalence Estimates from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey \(NHANES\), 2013-2018. Circulation, June 2022.](#)

- Only 1 in 5 Americans have good heart health
- N=23,000
- Based on score of 0-100 on Life's Essential 8





What is inflammation?

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSTagULmTFA>

Inflammation

Inflammation is an immune response designed to remove damaged tissue and foreign substances.

There are two main types...

Acute



Response length: minutes-weeks

Acute inflammation is caused by injuries and infections like splinters, cuts, and sprains.

&

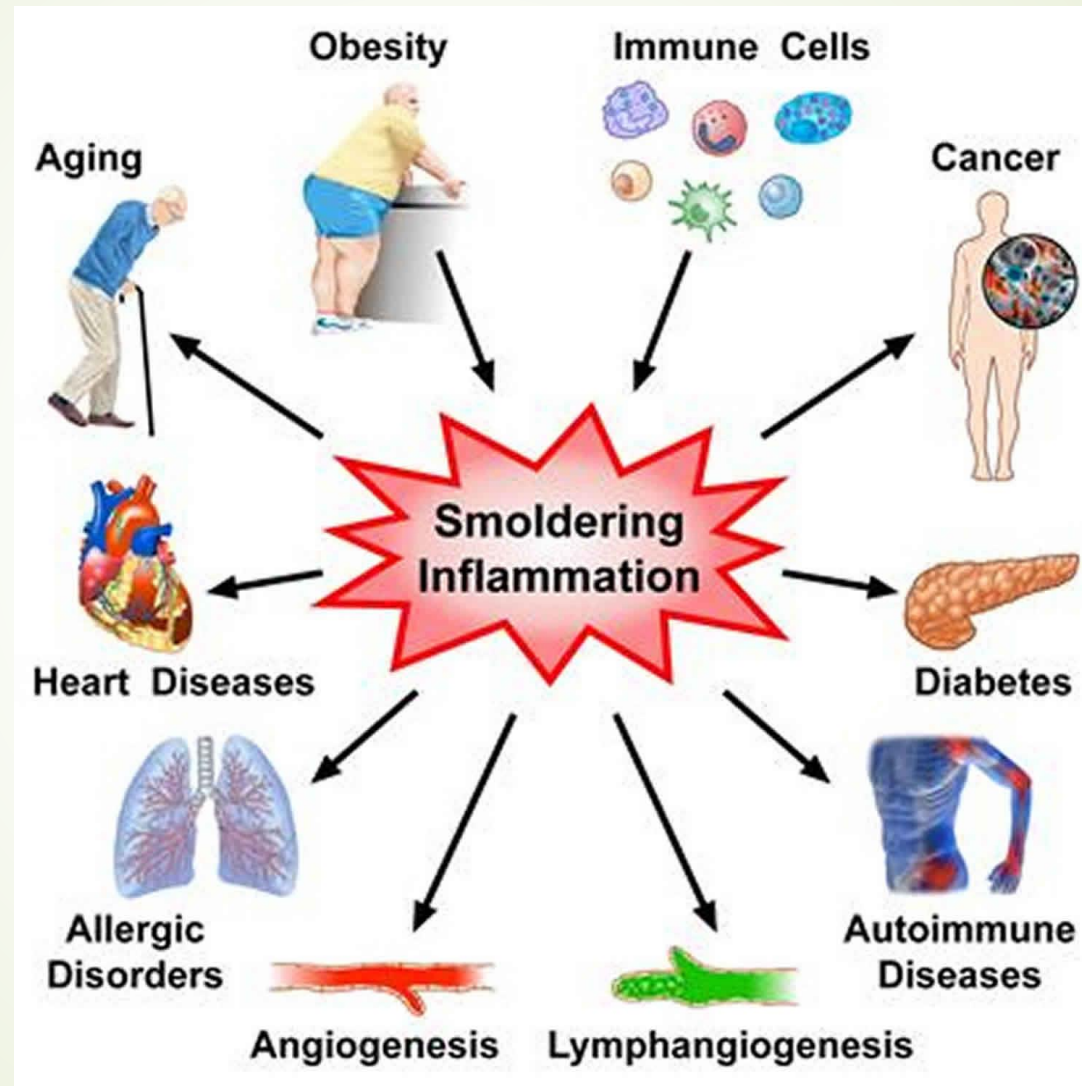
Chronic

Aggravation must be sustained to lead to chronic inflammation. Diet, autoimmune disorders, and general stress are common causes.



Response length: months-years

Impaired memory,
frailty





How to measure chronic inflammation

- C-Reactive Protein (CRP)
 - Goal: <1 mg/L
 - Higher in 'Western' diet
 - Lower when diet has more fruits and veggies
 - Drops on whole food plant-based diet
 - Complementary Therapies in Medicine. 2015 Feb;23(1):32-7
 - "C-reactive protein response to a vegan lifestyle intervention"
 - N=600, intervention study
- Interleukin 6 (IL6)
 - Can double within 6 hours of pro-inflammatory meal
 - Health fats (nuts, avocado) may blunt effects

Arthritis

- Inflammation or swelling of joints
 - Joint pain and stiffness
- Rheumatoid arthritis
 - autoimmune disease, attack synovial membranes



Pro-inflammatory Foods

- High fat: saturated fat, cholesterol, trans fats
- Fast foods
- Refined carbohydrates
- Junk foods
- Sugary foods and drinks
- Refined, processed foods



Anti-inflammatory foods



- Fruits
- Veggies
- Whole grains
- Nuts & seeds
- Legumes, beans
- Soy
- Berries
- Citrus
- Black, white & green tea
- Turmeric, garlic, ginger
- Tomatoes
- Omega 3 fatty acids – fish, walnuts, flax, chia
- High fiber!!!





Why does a plant forward diet help inflammation & arthritis?

- High in phytonutrients
 - Antioxidants are usually anti-inflammatory
- Less processed foods
 - Processed white flour carbs contribute to inflammation
- Generally low in fat
 - High fat and saturated fat foods increase inflammation
- High in fiber
 - NHANES study found the more fiber, the less inflammation



Exceptions to the rule

- ▶ Not all plant foods are anti-inflammatory
 - ▶ Tropical oils – palm, coconut
- ▶ Not all animal foods are pro-inflammatory
 - ▶ Omega 3 fatty acids in fish
 - ▶ BUT, fish oils don't lower inflammatory disease mortality
 - ▶ Contamination?

Anti-inflammatory Diet

- **Eat from the rainbow**
- Low in processed, low nutrient foods
- Lots of fruits and veggies
- Calories to maintain a healthy weight
- High fiber whole grains
- Low in animal protein
- Choose plant proteins: legumes, soy, nuts & seeds
- Healthy unprocessed fats: olives, nuts, seeds, avocado
- Includes Omega-3 fats: walnuts, flax, chia, fish
- Lots of antioxidant spices and herbs: garlic, green herbs, ginger, and turmeric
- Drink tea
- Moderate amount of red wine (if you drink)
- A little bit of chocolate (>70% cocoa)



What about Nightshades?



- Plants that contain solanine – chemical accused of being culprit in arthritis pain
- Eggplant, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers
- Limited evidence to show the link
- Some people may be sensitive
- If that is you, then avoid nightshades for a few weeks, then slowly add back one at a time to see effect

Spices put out the fire

- ▶ Turmeric
 - ▶ Curcumin
- ▶ Ginger
- ▶ Garlic
- ▶ Red chili peppers
- ▶ Black pepper (animal studies)
- ▶ Rosemary
- ▶ Cloves
- ▶ Cumin, black cumin
- ▶ Cinnamon



Summer Foods to fight the fire

- Rainbow fruit salad platter with citrus drizzle
 - Berries, fruits
 - Citrus, cinnamon, ginger
- Edamame Salad
 - Beans
 - Onions
 - Green herbs
 - Citrus
 - Tomato



Bottom line

- ▶ Just like always-
 - ▶ Eat whole foods
 - ▶ Fruits, veggies, whole grains, beans, nuts & seeds
 - ▶ Limit animal food and fats
 - ▶ Drop the processed foods
 - ▶ Drink tea, not sodas
 - ▶ Maintain a healthy weight
 - ▶ Add spices whenever you can
 - ▶ Not sure where to start? Ask us for help!





Thank You!

