



Can Foods Cause Inflammation?

What you should know about diet and inflammation.

Research has shown that inflammation can affect our bodies in many ways.

What is inflammation?

Inflammation can be a natural immune system response to different types of damage in our bodies. Or, it can be an unnatural response.

Inflammation is often referred to as "oxidative stress". You may have heard some foods referred to as "rich in antioxidants. Yet, some foods can cause that oxidative stress.

When we have a cut, bruise, infection or other injuries and sicknesses; our immune system sends white blood cells and chemical fighters to the scene to help keep us healthy. The area around a cut or bruise becomes red, warm, and swollen. That is a sign that help has arrived. When the injury is healed, the swelling goes away and things are back to normal.

There are 2 types of inflammation: acute, and chronic. That short activity described above is called 'acute inflammation'.

What is chronic inflammation?

Chronic inflammation means long-term inflammation, which can last for several months and even years. Chronic inflammation is a much more serious concern. It can result from:

- failure to eliminate whatever was causing an acute inflammation.
- an autoimmune response; meaning the immune system attacks healthy tissue by mistake.
- a chronic irritant of low intensity that persists.

Could I be at risk for inflammation?

Examples of medical problems with chronic inflammation are asthma, arthritis, gout, hepatitis, poorly controlled diabetes, poorly controlled cholesterol, and poorly controlled hypertension. Some research suggest chronic inflammation can increase the risk of developing cancerous tumors.

Inflammation can also be caused by environment. Such as shoes that do not fit well! Or even uncontrolled stress.

Diet has also been shown to be a possible source of inflammation.

Discuss with your doctor, or other health care provider, if you might be at risk for chronic inflammation.

What in my diet might be causing inflammation?

Saturated and Trans Fats

Research continues to show that persons with a diet low in saturated fats, and no trans fats, show less signs of unnatural inflammation.

The recommended limit (RDA) for saturated fat intake is no more than an average of 16g (grams) per day. The recommended limit for trans fats is no more than 2g (grams) per day.

Saturated fats include:	whole fat dairy foods	butter	coconut oil
	cheeses	cocoa butter	palm oil
	animal fats or skins	deep fried foods	vegetable shortening or lard

Simple Carbohydrates

Use as little as possible:	processed sugars	fructose	honey	syrops	agave
	high fructose corn syrup	candies	pastries	cookies	milk
	Sodas or sugary drinks	fruit juices (even if no added sugar)			dextrose

Choose more whole grain unprocessed foods. This also helps to increase your fiber intake which has been shown to help manage inflammation. Beans, legumes and whole grains are complex carbohydrates.

Try to take 2 servings of whole fruit (2 cups) plus 4-5 servings of vegetables (4-5 cups raw or 2-3 cups cooked) every day. Following a moderate intake of any carbohydrates appears to help.

What about how you prepare foods?

Frying (especially deep-frying), burning, and blackening foods creates compounds such as HCA, AGE, and acrylamides. All of these have been strongly associated with inflammation and oxidative stress.

Your safest methods of preparing foods are using low-to-moderate heat.

Try methods such as boiling, medium heat sautéing, steaming, low heat roasting, smoking, or stewing/braising.

If you do cook over a grill fire, or broil foods, be sure to keep the heat low.

Deep-frying foods also increases the saturated fats and trans fats content of foods.

Are there foods that can help prevent or control inflammation?

Yes. Foods that are higher in 'antioxidants' have been shown to help lower inflammation.

- omega-3 fatty acid sources such as fish, chia seeds or flax oil (not flax seeds)
- berries and cherries
- green leafy vegetables & cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbages)
- yellow and red fruits and vegetables
- nuts (especially walnuts); whole grains; soy beans and other legumes
- tea (black, green or white in small amounts per day)
- monounsaturated fats (avocado, nuts, olive oil, canola oil, sesame)
- saffron, garlic, turmeric, and ginger

For more diet information, request a referral to a Registered Dietitian.