

Anti-Inflammatory Diet

Inflammation is a natural process initiated by the immune system in response to illness, trauma, toxins, physical stress and chronic disease. Acute inflammation is a short-term process but if not addressed, can progress into chronic, long term inflammation which can lead to and aggravate a number of health conditions. The following dietary suggestions aim to decrease inflammation.

Eat a Whole Grain and Low Glycemic Diet

- Intake of refined grains and simple sugars has been positively associated with risk of developing inflammatory mediated diseases including diabetes mellitus and cardiovascular disease. Intake of these foods has been associated with an increase in inflammatory protein concentrations, which is believed to relate to the formation of chronic inflammatory conditions.

7 – 10 Servings of Fruit and Vegetables per Day

- Colorful fruits and vegetables contain a variety of phytochemicals and bioactive compounds that are thought to be anti-inflammatory. A bioactive compound is a general term for numerous substances naturally found within plant foods that have been found to provide numerous health benefits to humans when consumed.
- Although all fruits and vegetables are beneficial, green leafy vegetables, cabbage, onions, berries, cherries, pomegranate, and citrus fruits have been studied for their anti-inflammatory properties.

Quality Fats

- Fats to include:
 - Poly-unsaturated fats high in **omega-3 fatty acids** have been shown to provide anti-inflammatory benefits. Best sources include cold-water fish such as salmon, ground flaxseed, and walnuts. Flaxseed oil is a potent plant source of omega-3 fatty acids but should not be cooked with or heated.
 - **Extra-virgin olive oil** is versatile and may provide anti-inflammatory benefits when consumed as part of a balanced plant based diet.
 - The fats and bioactive compounds present in **nuts** may also provide anti-inflammatory benefit. Examples include walnuts, pumpkin seeds, almonds, cashews, ground flaxseed, chia seeds, Brazil nuts, sesame seeds, and sunflower seeds.
- Fats to limit or avoid:
 - **Processed fats high in omega-6 fatty acids** have been found to promote inflammation. Common sources of high-omega 6 include safflower oil, sunflower oils, corn oil, and soybean oil. Many of these oils are used in processed or pre-prepared foods, so be sure to read labels and reduce intake.
 - Avoid **trans fats** in the form of shortening, margarine, and partially hydrogenated oils. Read ingredient lists carefully avoiding hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils.

Herbs and Spices

- Herbs and spices have strong anti-inflammatory properties and can be added in creative and flavorful ways to most foods. Powerful anti-inflammatory herbs and spices include: turmeric, ginger, garlic, curry, cinnamon, rosemary, basil, and thyme.

Tea

- Black, green, red, and white tea (*Camellia sinensis*) may help reduce inflammation due to the high polyphenol content (present as catechins) and antioxidant potential.

Avoid Chemicals

- Many industrial chemicals and pesticides can irritate the immune system and cause inflammation. When possible, choose organic foods and “green” personal care and cleaning products. Refer to the Environmental Working Group (www.ewg.org) to look up your personal care and cleaning products and examine the risk score. Choosing products with low risk scores may help to reduce your exposure to aggravating chemicals and improve inflammation.

Minimize Alcohol Intake

- While modest intake of red wine may provide health benefits, excess alcohol intake (more than 1 drink/day women, more than 2 drinks/day men) can increase inflammation, and irritate the digestive tract and liver. Limiting or avoiding alcohol will provide the most anti-inflammatory benefits.

Stress Reduction

- Psychological stress can increase the inflammatory response. Physical activity, yoga, and meditation may be helpful to reduce stress and therefore may reduce inflammation.

Food Allergy Elimination

- Food allergies can often cause inflammatory symptoms in the body. Common food allergens include milk, eggs, fish, wheat, tree nuts, peanuts, soybeans and shellfish. Food allergies may present with variable or limited symptoms. Your dietitian or healthcare provider will help you decide if food allergy elimination will help to reduce inflammation.

Chai Golden Milk

This simple chai provides the anti-inflammatory effects multiple spices in a delicious drink. Serves 1
8 oz hot water

2 Tablespoons chai tea spice mix, or 1 chai spice tea bag (should contain cinnamon, cardamom, black pepper, cloves & dried ginger)

1-2 Tablespoons coconut milk

1 teaspoon turmeric

Procedure: Place spice mix* or tea bag in a medium size mug and pour in 8oz hot water. Allow tea to steep for 5 minutes. Then remove spice mix or tea bag and add in coconut milk and turmeric. Stir to combine and then drink hot. Enjoy!

(*place spice mix in a tea ball or use a tea strainer)

References

- [Naturalmedicines.therapeuticresearch.com](https://naturalmedicines.therapeuticresearch.com). Natural Medicines Database - Anti Inflammatory Diet. 2015. Available at: <https://naturalmedicines.therapeuticresearch.com/databases/food,-herbs-supplements/professional.aspx?productid=1294#background>.
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