

Inflammatory Foods

Sugars (soft drinks, fruit juices, punch, sweet tea, pastries, desserts, cookies, candies, snack cakes, cereals): Diets high in refined sugar (as little as one can of soda per day) can be a significant contributor to chronic inflammation. Sugar stimulates the production of free fatty acids in the liver, which when digested, can trigger inflammation processes. Refined sugars also trigger the release of inflammatory cells called cytokines.

Common Cooking Oils: Common vegetable oils (safflower, olive, peanut, soybean, sunflower, corn, and cottonseed) are not only used in many homes and restaurants, they're common in most processed and packaged foods as well. Vegetable oils metabolize into Arachidonic Acid and other forms of Omega 6 fatty acids which lead to chronic, low-grade inflammation. Coconut oil should also be avoided due to its extremely high level of saturated fat (over 2x more saturated fat than lard).

Trans Fats: Trans fatty acids (any type of hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils) are notorious for their double-whammy effect. They increase bad cholesterol while lowering good cholesterol. But that's not all they do. They also promote inflammation, obesity, resistance to insulin and lay the groundwork for degenerative illness.

Trans fats are found in deep fried foods, fast food, commercial baked goods, margarine, frozen pizza, cookies, some peanut butters, crackers, cake mixes, and *many* packaged foods. NOTE: Due to labeling loopholes, the outside of the package can say "0 grams of Trans Fat" and *STILL* contain some amount of hydrogenated oils (trans fat). Read the ingredient lists and stay away from anything "hydrogenated."

Dairy products: Milk is a common allergen that can trigger inflammatory responses such as stomach distress, constipation, diarrhea, skin rashes, and hives.

Milk and dairy products—such as butter, cheese, sour cream, yogurt, and ice cream—lead to the formation of inflammatory prostaglandins (fat compounds that have hormone-like effects). Prostaglandins limit the healing process, increase inflammation and pain, and play a key role in tumor development.

Apart from obvious milk products, foods with hidden dairy content can include bread, cookies, crackers, cakes, cream sauces, and boxed cereals. Whey and casein are common milk proteins to avoid. Again, pay attention to the ingredient lists.

Feedlot-Raised Meat (Beef, poultry, pork, lamb): The commercially produced meats found in supermarkets and restaurants are from animals fed a diet high in inflammatory omega-6 fatty acids. Meat is also high in saturated fat, cholesterol, sulfur-containing amino acids, growth hormones, antibiotics, steroids, and endotoxins, all of which contribute to inflammatory responses. In fact, saturated fat is listed as the #1 pro-inflammatory food component. It should be noted that consuming organic meats from animals given no antibiotics or hormones does not reduce the risk of inflammation or disease due to the many *inherent* properties of saturated fat, cholesterol, acids, growth hormones, and endotoxins contained in the meats.

Fish, beef, pork, and lamb also contain an acidic sugar molecule that humans don't naturally produce, called Neu5Gc. After ingesting this foreign compound, the body develops anti-Neu5Gc antibodies as an immune response that can trigger chronic inflammation.

Meats also contain AGE's (advanced glycation end products)—harmful compounds which are formed when protein or fat combines with sugar in the bloodstream. AGE's contribute to inflammation; and certain cooking methods, such as grilling, roasting, frying, and baking, can cause their levels in food to skyrocket.

Processed Meat: Processed meats include hot dogs, ham, bacon, sausage, pepperoni, jerky, salami, or any meats which have been smoked, cured, or salted. In addition to the concerns associated with feedlot-raised meats listed above,

processed meats are ranked in the top category of cancer-causing carcinogens. Plus, processed meat contains more inflammatory AGE's than any other meats.

Refined Grains (white rice, white flour, white bread, noodles, cookies, cakes, cereals, biscuits, pretzels, and pastries): These stripped and polished grains are devoid of fiber, B vitamins, and other phytonutrients; similar to refined sugars, refined grains are practically empty calories which cause blood sugar spikes. Such spikes trigger a pro-inflammatory chemical reaction called glycation; glycation plays a role in everything from heart disease and diabetes to arthritis and cataracts.

Alcohol (beer, ciders, liquors, and wines): Regular or high consumption of alcohol has been shown to damage the intestinal lining and allow bacteria to enter the bloodstream (a condition called Leaky Gut), which drives inflammation throughout the body. Alcohol also causes irritation and inflammation of the esophagus, larynx (voice box) and liver; plus it increases the production of harmful bacteria and endotoxins in the gut, suppresses the immune system, and can impair the function of key organs.

According to the Arthritis Foundation, once you already have arthritis, drinking will not mix well with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) such as ibuprofen (Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve), which carry a greater risk of stomach bleeding and ulcers when you drink. Plus, alcohol—when taken with acetaminophen, methotrexate, or leflunomide—can make you more susceptible to liver damage.

Artificial Food Additives: Some artificial food additives like aspartame and MSG (monosodium glutamate) reportedly trigger inflammatory responses, especially in people who are already suffering from conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis.

Fill in the Blank: Why is this blank? Because it's meant for any food you're allergic or sensitive to. Many people who are sensitive to certain foods remain unaware of it. Symptoms caused by food allergies can be delayed, and when they do appear, they are mistaken for common ailments such as tiredness and

headaches. But repeated, long-term exposure to foods that irritate can cause inflammation.

Common food allergens are gluten, dairy, nuts, eggs, and sometimes nightshade vegetables for those sensitive to solanine (nightshades include eggplant, tomatoes, potatoes, peppers). If you suspect you are allergic to a particular food, avoid it for two weeks and monitor your reaction. At the end of the abstinence period, re-introduce the food back into your diet to see if you're compatible with it. You should be able to easily notice a difference.

Anti-Inflammatory Foods

Starches (potatoes, rice, beans, legumes, squash, whole grains): Overall, starches contain anti-inflammatory properties such as resistant starch, fiber, beta-carotene, and anthocyanins (flavonoids). Let's break it down further:

Beans and Legumes: Beans combat inflammation because they're rich in folic acid, fiber, antioxidants, and other anti-inflammatory compounds. Choose from many varieties (chickpea/garbanzos, black beans, pintos, black-eyed peas, kidney beans, lentils, peas, and many more). Eat them well cooked, either whole, pureed into spreads like hummus, or mashed into salads such as Chickpea Salad Sandwiches.

Vegetables: Rich in phytochemicals, antioxidants, flavones, fiber, and anti-inflammatory properties, go for a wide range of colors and choose organic vegetables when possible. Eat your veggies both raw and cooked. Cruciferous vegetables, which include broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts, are loaded with antioxidants; and vegetables high in lycopene (another antioxidant which fights inflammation) include red peppers, asparagus, and tomatoes.

Mushrooms: Mushrooms are not only rich in anti-inflammatory compounds such as polysaccharides, carotenoids, phenols, and certain metabolites, they contain antioxidants and cancer fighting properties as well. Cooked Asian mushrooms, such as shitake or oyster mushrooms, also contain compounds that can boost immune function.

Greens: Dark-green lettuce, spinach, kale, chard, endive, beet greens, collard greens, and arugula all contain vitamins (such as A, C, D, E, and K) and other nutrients which are known to reduce inflammation. Many leafy greens also contain omega-3 fatty acids, another inflammation fighter.

Fruit: Fruits are rich in flavonoids, carotenoids, vitamins, and anti-inflammatory properties. Blueberries, apples, cherries, oranges, and many more are high in natural antioxidants and polyphenols which protect against inflammation. Fruits high in lycopene include watermelon, grapefruit, and mangos. Go for a wide range of colors. Choose fresh or frozen fruit, and buy organic when possible.

Whole Grains: Whole grains such as steel-cut oats, brown rice, barley, quinoa, buckwheat, wild rice, and any other unrefined grain are high in fiber and boost the immune system by feeding the beneficial bacteria in the gut (thereby reducing the risk of inflammation). Be sure to read the labels carefully; the words *Wheat Bread* on a product's packaging does not necessarily mean the product contains whole grains. Check the ingredient list for the word "whole" (i.e., whole wheat, whole rye, 100% whole).

Whole Soy Foods: Organic tofu, tempeh, edamame, soy nuts, miso, and soymilk all contain isoflavones, omega-3 fatty acids, and other phytoestrogens which provide antioxidant activity and protect against inflammation and cancer. Choose whole soy foods, not fractionated foods such as isolated soy protein powders and soy isolate which can contribute to inflammation.

Nuts & Seeds: Chia seeds, ground flaxseeds, brazil nuts, almonds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and walnuts are rich in anti-inflammatory Omega-3 fatty acids. A

variety of nuts and seeds are also rich in magnesium and Vitamin E, which plays a role in keeping inflammation under control. Because of their high fat content, nuts should be eaten sparingly or used as a condiment in a dish.

Herbs and Spices: Garlic, turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, curry powder, chili peppers, basil, rosemary, and thyme contain antioxidants and powerful chemical compounds that are known to lower chronic inflammation. Other benefits of these natural, anti-inflammatory foods include a stronger immune system and improved digestion.

Green Tea: Green tea is a rich source of polyphenols, including one called epigallocatechin 3-gallate (EGCG) with particularly potent antioxidant effects. Green tea also contains other natural anti-inflammatory compounds, such as catechins. Purchase high-quality tea and learn how to correctly brew it for maximum taste and health benefits

Plants have fiber! Foods high in fiber provide strong anti-inflammatory effects because fiber releases butyrate into the bloodstream. Butyrate is a short-chain fatty acid which can be found in plant foods such as beans, whole grains, and legumes such as split peas, chickpeas, and lentils. Fiber is ONLY found in plant foods. There is no fiber in meat, fish, dairy products, or bakery items.

Plants have antioxidants! Antioxidants such as vitamins A, C, and E are abundant in beans, berries, sweet potatoes, apples, cherries, dark greens, pecans, grapes, squash, and cacao powder. Antioxidants protect against the damaging effects of inflammatory cytokine cells.

Sweet Tooth? Dates, figs, kiwis, pineapple, mango, home-made banana ice cream, and fruit-based smoothies are just some of the natural sweet treats you can try. The use of natural sweeteners such as maple syrup, honey, or stevia should be done so sparingly.



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