

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DIET

INTRODUCTION: Inflammation on the surface of the body (characterized by local redness, heat, swelling, and pain) is the cornerstone of the body's healing response. As such, the inflammation brings nourishment and immune activity to the site of injury or infection. Chronic internal inflammation serves no purpose, however; it is damaging to the body and contributes to chronic disease. It plays a significant role in heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, and other age-related disorders such as cancer.

Contributors to chronic inflammation include stress, lack of exercise, genetic predisposition, exposure to toxins such as secondhand smoke, and a poor diet. An anti-inflammatory diet can reduce chronic internal inflammation and aid healing.

HOW IT WORKS: The anti-inflammatory diet counteracts the chronic inflammation that is a root cause of many serious diseases. The diet is based on 1) a healthy balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, and 2) reduced consumption of carbohydrates, margarine, vegetable shortening, and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils.

Most people consume an excess of omega-6 fatty acids, which are used in almost all snack foods and fast foods. The body synthesizes from these fatty acids hormones that cause inflammation. In contrast, omega-3 fatty acids — found in oily fish, walnuts, flax, hemp, and to a smaller degree in soy and canola oils and sea vegetables — have an anti-inflammatory effect. Oily varieties of fish — wild Alaskan salmon, sardines, herring, and black cod — are rich in omega-3s.

Carbohydrates also influence the inflammatory process. Chemical reactions between protein and the sugars in carbohydrates produce pro-inflammatory compounds called AGEs (advanced glycation end products). The production of AGEs can be moderated by keeping blood sugar low and stable (eating less bread, white potatoes, crackers, chips, pastries, sweetened drinks, and processed foods); avoiding fast foods and products made with high fructose corn syrup; eating fewer tropical fruits such as bananas, pineapple, mango and papaya; and eating more whole grains, beans, sweet potatoes, winter squashes, and temperate fruits such as berries, cherries, apples, and pears. It helps also to get less of one's protein from meat and poultry, which contain pro-inflammatory fats, and more from vegetable protein (soy foods, beans, lentils, and other legumes), whole grains, seeds, and nuts.

INDICATIONS: The anti-inflammatory diet is universally beneficial, but is specifically helpful for treating inflammatory diseases and conditions including chronic pain, arthritis, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, sinusitis, allergies, acne, asthma, digestive conditions, dysmenorrhea (painful menstruation), endometriosis, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease, osteoporosis, hypertension, depression, insulin resistance syndrome or syndrome X (pre-diabetes), and diabetes.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Patients should avoid foods that could cause an allergic reaction, as determined in consultation with their doctor.

TREATMENT PROTOCOLS: Patients are provided with healthy eating guidelines and menu plans specific to their health issues and conditions. Handouts are provided to support healthy, practical eating choices that stimulate natural healing.

