

Ideas for Healthier Eating – the Anti Inflammation Diet

There is evidence to suggest that there is more to be gained by eating a Low Inflammation Diet than from a low cholesterol diet. Inflammation is involved in many medical conditions, including heart disease, peripheral artery disease, diabetes, auto-immune problems, infections, pre-term labor, and cancer. Chronic inflammation is caused by stress, injured tissue, and dys-metabolism or ‘food chaos’.

Most of us have heard that abdominal fat is worse for you than hip and thigh fat. Specifically, when someone carries a lot of extra weight around their waist, a lot of it is on the inside, around our abdominal organs. These abdominal fat cells, or adipocytes, are not just sitting there being fat! They are metabolically active, especially when they are over-nourished. This can cause them to act like injured tissue, and release a lot of damaging hormones, like tumor necrosis factor, IL-6 and free radicals. These hormones can cause tissue damage elsewhere in the body, like the inside of your blood vessels, as one example. So, the anti-inflammation diet should also include increased efforts to reduce belly fat—e.g. weight loss!

Some foods in particular stimulate this inflammatory reaction. Others tend to turn the inflammation off and help repair the damage:

Pro-Inflammatory foods (the Baddies)	Anti-Inflammatory Food (the Good Guys)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Damaged fats -- trans fats (hydrogenated fats) found in prepared foods & margarines (read the label), meats grilled or broiled on high heat, all fried foods and refined oils. ● Fructose - -found in table sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, agave syrup, fruit juices (limit to ½ cup per day) ● High glycemic index foods –foods made from flour or other ground up grains, white rice, potatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Healthy fats – omega-3 (fish & flax seeds), unroasted nuts & seeds, extra-virgin olive oil other unrefined oils, avocados ● Whole foods (barley, lentils, steel cut oats, vegetables, fruits, etc.) ● Vitamin D (max. unless directed by physician is 4000iu per day—1000-2000iu per day is adequate for most) ● Phytonutrients—nutrients found in whole foods & spices that promote health ● Spices—turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, chili, curries, etc. (not salt!)

Rather than focusing on what we have to get rid of in our diet, let’s focus on getting more helpful food into our diet. Guess what?! We only have to eat for health 80% of the time. That leaves 20% for Fun Foods!! That’s pretty good!

Here is a list of Good Guys Anti-Inflammatory Foods:

- Omega-3 fatty acids – flax seed & flax seed oil, seafood and fish oil, grass-fed animals & dairy.
- Vegetables, like green leafies, sweet potatoes, onions and garlic, foods with lots of color
- Fruit – grapes, apples, oranges, berries especially. Not juice – too high in carbs, missing the fiber and whole foodiness—limit juice to ½ cup per day.
- Herbs and spices – thyme, cinnamon, turmeric, rosemary and others
- Nuts – especially almonds and walnuts. Raw is better than roasted.
- Dark chocolate in moderation.
- Red wine in moderation—max 5 oz. per day.
- Green, oolong, or black tea.
- Whole or sprouted grains, ground flax seeds (keep in freezer!)
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Legumes (beans) and lentils.

A lot of these foods are found in a Mediterranean diet. Here are some ways to try to work more of these foods into your daily menu:

1. Have a fruit with breakfast and lunch.
2. Have 1-2 cups vegetable with lunch and dinner (potato chips do not count, sorry!).
3. Use extra virgin olive oil for salads and sautéing and to dress pasta.
4. Choose sprouted wheat breads, steel cut oats, barley, quinoa—limit foods made from flours.
5. Get 2000 IUs of Vitamin D3 every day – supplement or food.
6. Eat 10 – 15 almonds or walnuts every day.
7. Take 1000mg EPA/DHA from fish oil or eat salmon, mackerel, or sardines 3times a week.
8. Limit to 1 small sweet treat per day (naturally or artificially sweetened)!

Consider making some of these ideas a regular part of your food choices. If this sounds like too much change, make a few changes now and add to them every week or every month. Any change you make is making you healthier now and for the future! Please ask us if you have questions or would like more information.

The information in this handout is based on a presentation by Cindy Brinn MPH, RD, CDE, BC-ADM.

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