

Acute inflammation is the body's way of protecting itself and healing from injury or infectious process. When the body is in a prolonged state of inflammation, however, it becomes harmful. Chronic inflammation can lead to autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and Crohn's disease. It may also result in conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and psoriasis. While there is no exact "diet" for treating inflammation, eating a variety of healthy foods is a great way to try and minimize it. Incorporate these nutrient-packed foods into your everyday diet.

Fruit: Packed with antioxidants, which can help fortify the body's immune system by protecting against oxidative stress and free radicals that create inflammation in the body. To ensure an intake of healthy nutrients and other powerful, protective substances called phytonutrients, make sure to eat a wide variety of fruit ranging in different colors such as blackberries, raspberries, oranges, cherries, strawberries, grapes and cantaloupe.

Vegetables: Similar to fruit, veggies pack a powerful punch in terms of building up our body's natural defenses and decreasing inflammation. All vegetables are healthy, but there are a few that have higher amounts of antioxidants and phytonutrients such as broccoli, cabbage, leeks, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale, spinach, carrots, bell peppers, squash, sweet potatoes, and onions.

Nuts & Seeds: These small foods are jam-packed with good nutrition as they combine protein, healthy fats and fiber that contribute to decreasing inflammation. Almonds, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, cashews and hemp seeds are some of the best options to fight off inflammation.

Whole Grains: Quinoa, barley, steel cut oats, buckwheat and rye are some great examples of whole grains that are considered to be anti-inflammatory because of their high fiber and high antioxidant contents.

Beans & Legumes: These plant-based protein options are not only a great source of fiber, but they also have a multitude of antioxidants, minerals and phytonutrients as well. This includes lentils, peas, and all different types of beans (black, pinto, white, kidney, garbanzo, etc.).

Fats & Oils: Focus on monounsaturated oils such as olive oil and foods like avocados and macadamia nuts. Also, aim for adequate intake of polyunsaturated fat, especially omega-3 fats found in oily fish such as salmon, sardines, trout, mackerel and herring or other foods such as walnuts, chia seeds and flaxseeds. Both types of fats are very beneficial when it comes to staving off inflammation.

Miscellaneous Food items: Dark chocolate (the less processed the better), fresh herbs and spices (e.g. cinnamon, curry, dill, rosemary, ginger, mint, cayenne and turmeric, etc.), spirulina, mushrooms, tea and red wine (in moderation!). These all have various phytonutrients and antioxidants and are great to decrease inflammation.

Foods to limit or avoid: Keep your intake of all processed foods to a minimum! Restrict intake of packaged potato chips, cookies and desserts, fast food and sugar sweetened beverages as much as possible. Try to limit oils such as corn, safflower, sunflower and cottonseed oil. Also, limit saturated fats such as red meat, whole fat dairy products and margarine. Avoid all trans fats (anything that has partially hydrogenated oil in the ingredients list). By limiting refined grains, saturated fats and added sugars as much as possible you leave more room for those healthy fruits, vegetables, nuts and whole grains.

Non food tips: Maintaining a healthy body weight for your height is essential to preventing inflammation as excess fat triggers the production of inflammation in the body. Adequate quantity and quality of sleep is also vital to warding off inflammation as it allows the body to rest and recover. Minimizing stress is a definitive way to minimize inflammation. Find relaxation techniques that work for you and practice them! (e.g. deep breathing, yoga, meditation). Lastly, find time for regular exercise (aim for at least 150 minutes per week) to strengthen your body so it is able to fight off inflammation.