

THE SPARK THAT IGNITES DISEASE

Are you someone who is actively making healthy choices for your well-being? You may not realize it, but those healthy choices have one basic underlying goal: to prevent or reduce inflammation. Why? Because inflammation can be the spark that ignites the spiral of accelerated aging, chronic illness, and disease.

WHAT IS INFLAMMATION?

Inflammation is a part of your body's very smart, natural immune defense system against infection, irritation, toxins, and other foreign molecules. The classic signs are pain, swelling, redness, and heat; such as with a sore throat or skinned knee. Your body constantly surveys itself and mounts an immune response to threats when necessary. It responds by producing inflammatory molecules that protect you from foreign invaders; such as cytokines, interleukins, chemokins, and the secretory antibodies IgA, IgG, IgE, and IgM. Ideally, injuries and illnesses are healed and your body is once again returned to health and homeostasis.

Chronic Inflammation Sometimes the body shifts into a chronic state of alarm or inflammation and the natural balance of the immune system becomes disrupted. It puts the body's immune system on constant high alert. This chronic inflammation causes oxidative damage to the cells in the body. The swelling does not diminish and the body's immune system remains on the attack. It is very destructive to the body and it worsens over time causing chronic illness. Low-grade inflammation can occur quietly and insidiously, and like smoke in a fire, can be a silent killer. Systemic inflammation occurs when chronic inflammation moves from localized tissues to the blood vessels and organs. Eventually, the smoldering fire of inflammation throughout the body is what can spark full-blown disease.

THE CAUSES OF INFLAMMATION:

Digestive Issues- Since the immune system is primarily based in the digestive tract, weaknesses in this area can be the cause of inflammation. Intestinal Permeability (commonly known as Leaky Gut syndrome) allows germs and toxins which should not enter the bloodstream to do so, prompting a constant immune response. Food allergies and sensitivities exacerbate the inflammatory response even further.

An Unhealthy Diet- A diet lacking in nutrients cannot perform cellular functions well, including repair and recovery. The modern, American diet is low in nutrient-rich whole foods containing vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, and enzymes that are necessary for optimum nutrition. Instead it often consists of nutrient-depleting foods including excessive sugar, refined and processed foods, genetically modified foods, chemical additives and preservatives, trans fats, and processed industrial oils.

Lifestyle Factors- Stress is inflammatory, in all its many forms. When the body feels in fight-or flight mode, it perceives a threat and the inflammatory process instinctually kicks in. A sedentary lifestyle and lack of exercise also contribute. Being overweight is also a factor. Obesity can contribute to inflammation. Conversely, inflammation in the body's fat cells also causes obesity.

Chemical Toxins- Environmental toxins cause stress to the body's immune system, including: cleaning products, air-fresheners, laundry products, plastics, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and smoking. These man-made irritants cause the body to work harder to process and eliminate them.

Hidden Infections- Long-term or low-grade bacterial, fungal, or parasitic infections can cause damage to cells or tissues and cause inflammatory responses and subsequent diseases. Dysbiosis in the gut due to lack of beneficial bacteria and overwhelming disease-producing microbes can cause inflammation.



Any health problem ending in *-itis* can involve inflammation, plus...

- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Dementia
- Osteoporosis
- Types 1 & 2 diabetes
- Adrenal fatigue
- Alzheimer's disease
- Obesity
- Depression
- Insulin resistance
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Thyroid issues
- Autoimmune dysfunction/disease
- Mouth sores
- Allergies
- Asthma
- Candidiasis
- Acne
- Parkinson's disease
- Periodontal disease
- Crohn's disease
- Ulcerative colitis
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Celiac disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Lupus
- Sjogren's disease
- Hypertension
- and many others.....



HOW TO FIGHT AGAINST INFLAMMATION

1. Eliminate Factors that Cause Inflammation

Sometimes the offenders that cause inflammation are obvious. Sometimes it will require some detective work, testing, and consulting with a experienced doctor or health professional. Your health is worth the effort.

Dietary Factors:

Eliminate inflammatory foods - These include most grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes, especially if not prepared properly by soaking or sprouting. Gluten protein, found in wheat, barley, and rye, is especially inflammatory. Processed industrial oils such as canola, vegetable, soy, corn, safflower oil, and trans fats contain excessive amounts of omega 6 fatty acids, which turn on the inflammatory cascade. Genetically modified foods (GMO's) effect the human body in negative ways. Meats from animals raised in feedlots instead of on a pasture or natural habitat can also be detrimental to health. This is also true of pasteurized dairy products. Chemical food additives, like preservatives, artificial coloring and flavors, hormones, and antibiotics, may cause a negative response in the body.

Address food intolerances & allergies - The most common offenders are wheat, dairy, eggs, corn, soy, and peanuts.

Dietary factors to eliminate inflammation, cont..

Remove sugary and high-glycemic foods - These refined sugars and carbohydrates make blood sugar spike and eventually cause insulin resistance, which is highly inflammatory. They put the immune system in constant protective mode. They are also a large culprit in weight gain.

Heal a leaky gut - Digestive system repair is paramount. Balancing bacteria to support the immune system and help eliminate toxins is also key. When the body is allowed to stop trying to protect itself all the time, it can work towards reducing inflammation and instead support whole-body health and repair.

Lifestyle Factors:

Reduce toxin exposure - Reduce chemicals in things you can control (cleaning products, cosmetics, air fresheners, clothes, furniture, bedding, laundry products, and so on.) They can all be replaced with natural alternatives.

Address environmental allergies - For example, the common case of mold in damp basements or bathrooms, or hidden in walls, is something you can fix to improve your health.

Don't do too little or too much exercise - Being sedentary is inflammatory, but so is over-exercise if it puts undue strain on the body. This is especially true of chronic-cardio exercise.

Eliminate excessive stress - Work, school, family, finances, self expectations, and daily life, ugh! Our hectic American lives are a breeding ground for health problems associated with chronic stress. Learn to change the things you can, accept the things you cannot change, and understand the difference. Control what you can and give up control when you need to. Make life simpler.

Treat hidden infections - Work with a health professional to eliminate any underlying conditions.

2. Increase Anti-Inflammatory Foods & Lifestyle Habits

The foods you eat, the thoughts you think, the environment you live in, and the actions you take all communicate to your genes and send messages to either increase or decrease inflammation. To cool the fire of inflammation, you need to send the right signals to your body and your genes. Remember, the goal with these healthy choices is to avoid illness and disease.

Eat Foods that Reduce Inflammation:

Whole, unprocessed foods - Eating a variety of nutrient-rich, whole-foods will supply the vitamins, minerals, and enzymes that are necessary for optimum nutrition, health, and well-being. This includes a bountiful supply of vegetables and fruits (preferably organic), fresh spices and herbs, prepared nuts and seeds, some starchy tubers, healthy fats, eggs grass-fed meats, raw dairy, wild-caught fish, free range pork and poultry, fermented foods, and organ meats. These all help keep the body ideally in a state of "homeostasis", which means balance and a relative state of equilibrium.

Phytonutrients - "Phyto" means plant. Phytonutrients, such as polyphenols and flavonoids, are the healing plant chemicals found naturally in vegetables & fruits. They are what make up their wonderful, rich tastes and colors. The greater the variety and the deeper the color of the plant foods you eat, the higher the concentration of phytonutrients and their power to prevent inflammation and promote health. Vegetables and fruits are also the source of nature's most powerful antioxidants, which protect the body from damage from free-radicals and oxidation and put the brakes on the aging process. Vegetables and fruits are mostly alkaline foods, and the ideal state of the body fluids for optimal health is slightly alkaline.

Healthy fats - The omega-3 essential fatty acids (ALA, EPA & DHA) send the right messages to the body to reduce inflammation. Our body cannot make these fats, and we must obtain them through food. Omega-3 fats are found in fatty fish like sardines and salmon, in flax seed and oil, wild rice, walnuts, grass-fed beef, chocolate and cocoa butter, and even some vegetables. Most of the health benefits linked to omega-3 fats are linked to the animal-based EPA and DHA, not the plant-based ALA.

Engage in Lifestyle Habits that Reduce Inflammation:

Stress reduction - It's important to allow the body to switch off inflammation and thereby allow relaxation and healing. Adequate sleep is vital for health and stress reduction. Some other ways to reduce stress include listening to music, drinking herbal tea, meditation, deep breathing, socializing with friends, prayer, hiking, gardening, fishing, dancing, scrapbooking, singing, painting, and getting out into nature.

Exercise - Reducing inflammation is likely the main way that exercise helps to prevent disease. It carries nutrients to the cells and shuttles toxins out. Exercise can be any activity that you enjoy and gets you moving. Interval training and strength training are highly effective to tune up your body.

3. Use Anti-Inflammatory Nutritionals

These can be found in whole foods and are often in supplement form, also. See the books in the references below for further detail & proper usage.

Supplements:

- Multivitamins
- Multi-minerals
- Fish oil (krill, cod liver)
- Probiotics
- Resveratrol

Nutrients:

- Bromelain
- Carotenoids
- Flavonoids
- Magnesium
- Antioxidants

Herbs:

- Aloe Vera
- Echinacea
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Licorice
- Turmeric
- Capsaicin
- Green tea
- Quercetin

Amino Acids:

- Glutamine
- Lysine

TESTS FOR INFLAMMATION

C-reactive protein (CRP) test: This test looks for the level of CRP protein in the blood, which is the major marker of inflammation. Its presence is a tell-tale indicator of a heightened state of inflammation in the body. It is a common test your doctor can order. The most common reason for elevated CRP is metabolic syndrome or insulin resistance. Second most is a reaction to food from either an allergy, sensitivity, or autoimmune reaction.

Other related tests for common causes of inflammation:

- IgE tests for food and environmental allergies (immediate reaction)
- IgG tests for food sensitivities (delayed reaction)
- Gluten Intolerance/Celiac tests
- Hidden infections
- Leaky gut testing



In conclusion, inflammation is an immune reaction that can be acute or chronic. The addition of anti-inflammatory foods and lifestyle habits, along with eliminating the factors that cause chronic inflammation, will make a real difference in your overall health and well-being. You truly can take charge of your health, help control inflammation, and be proactive in preventing accelerated aging, chronic health conditions, and disease.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jenny Yelle is a Holistic Wellness Educator with a master's degree in Health and Nutrition Education from Hawthorn University. Jenny brings glamour to the realm of holistic wellness and believes in taking a nutritional approach to beauty and aging gracefully. Her wish is that everyone can feel and look beautiful, and live a beautiful, vibrant life simply by using the power of nutrient-rich foods and living a natural lifestyle. Radiating Beautiful Health!

Jenny is also the founder of the popular website Au Naturale Nutrition, where she shares her delicious whole-food recipes, plus many healthy living and natural beauty articles. Jenny lives in the Nashville, TN, area with her husband. Together they have raised two children. Jenny also enjoys yoga, community volunteer work, and is an avid tennis player.

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