

Inflammation Is at the Heart of Most Chronic Diseases

It's important to realize that chronic inflammation is the source of many if not most diseases, including cancer, obesity, and heart disease, which essentially makes it the leading cause of death in the US. It can also add to the symptoms of conditions like fibromyalgia and autoimmune disorders.

While inflammation is a perfectly normal and beneficial process that occurs when your body's white blood cells and chemicals protect you from foreign invaders like bacteria and viruses, it leads to trouble when the inflammatory response gets out of hand. Your diet has a lot to do with this chain of events.

While among the most potent, ounce for ounce, herbs and spices are certainly not the only anti-inflammatory ingredients available. A number of foods are well-known for their anti-inflammatory properties, and making sure you're eating a wide variety of them on a regular basis can go a long way toward preventing chronic illness.

Four Spices That Pack a Powerful Anti-Inflammatory Punch

For one week, 10 to 12 subjects in each of 13 groups consumed a small amount of a particular spice each day. For example, those in the oregano group ate just half a teaspoon of oregano daily for seven days. Blood samples were drawn one hour prior to consumption, and at the very end of the experiment.

Even at the "everyday" dosage amounts given, four spices were found to be significantly effective at quelling the inflammatory response:

Cloves 2. Ginger 3. Rosemary 4. Turmeric

As noted in the featured article: "[T]he results represents what might happen when cells in our body are exposed to the levels of spices that circulate in our bloodstream after normal daily consumption—not megadoses in some pill. Just the amount that makes our spaghetti sauce, pumpkin pie, or curry sauce taste good."

Other Potent Anti-Inflammatory Spices

1. Cinnamon 2. Jamaican allspice 3. Apple pie spice mixture 4. Oregano
5. Pumpkin pie Spice mix 6. Marjoram 7. Sage 8. Thyme 9. Gourmet Italian spine

Top Seven Anti-Inflammatory Foods

The following foods and nutrients deserve special mention for their ability to quell inflammatory responses in your body:

1. Animal-based omega-3 fat
Animal-based omega-3 fats—found in fatty fish like wild Alaskan salmon and fish- or krill oil—help fight inflammation throughout your body. It's particularly important for brain health. Research published in the *Scandinavian Journal of Gastroenterology* in 2012 confirmed that dietary supplementation with krill oil effectively reduced inflammation and oxidative stress.
2. Leafy greens
Dark leafy greens such as kale, spinach, collard greens and Swiss chard contain powerful antioxidants, flavonoids, carotenoids, and vitamin C—all of which help protect against cellular damage. Ideally, opt for organic locally grown veggies that are in season, and consider eating a fair amount of them raw. Juicing is an excellent way to get more greens into your diet.
3. Blueberries
Blueberries rate very high in antioxidant capacity compared to other fruits and vegetables. They are also lower in sugar than many other fruits.
4. Tea
Matcha tea is the most nutrient-rich green tea and comes in the form of a stone-ground unfermented powder. The best Matcha comes from Japan and has up to 17 times the antioxidants of wild blueberries, and seven times more than dark chocolate.

Tulsi is another tea loaded with anti-inflammatory antioxidants and other micronutrients that support immune function and heart health.

5. Fermented vegetables and traditionally cultured foods

Optimizing your gut flora is important for a well-functioning immune system, and helps ward off chronic inflammation. In fact, the majority of inflammatory diseases start in your gut, as the result of an imbalanced microbiome. Fermented foods such as kefir, natto, kimchee, miso, tempeh, pickles, sauerkraut, olives, and other fermented vegetables, will help 'reseed' your gut with beneficial bacteria.

Fermented foods can also help your body rid itself of harmful toxins such as heavy metals and pesticides that promote inflammation.

Shiitake mushrooms contain strong compounds with the natural ability to discourage inflammation, such as Ergothioneine, which inhibits oxidative stress.

6. Shiitake mushrooms

They also contain a number of unique nutrients that many do not get enough of in their diet.

One is copper, which is one of the few metallic elements accompanied by amino and fatty acids that are essential to human health. Since your body can't synthesize copper, your diet must supply it regularly. Copper deficiency can be a factor in the development of coronary heart disease.

7. Garlic

Garlic has been treasured for its medicinal properties for centuries. It's also one of the most heavily researched plant foods around. Over 170 studies⁵ show it benefitting more than 150 different conditions. Garlic exerts its benefits on multiple levels, offering anti-bacterial, anti-viral, anti-fungal, and antioxidant properties. It's more potent raw than cooked.

It's thought that much of garlic's therapeutic effect comes from its sulfur-containing compounds, such as allicin. Research has revealed that as allicin digests in your body it produces sulfenic acid, a compound that reacts faster with dangerous free radicals than any other known compound

Your Diet Is Key for Reducing Chronic Inflammation

The running thread linking a wide variety of common health problems—from obesity and diabetes to heart disease and cancer—is *chronic inflammation*. The key to reducing chronic inflammation in your body starts with your diet, and being liberal in your use of high-quality herbs and spices is one simple way to boost the quality of your food. They're an inexpensive "secret weapon" that just about everyone can take advantage of. Spicing up your meals is not enough, however, if processed foods comprise the bulk of your diet.

It's important to realize that dietary components can either *prevent* or *trigger* inflammation from taking root in your body, and processed foods do the latter, courtesy of pro-inflammatory ingredients like high fructose corn syrup, soy, processed vegetable oils (trans fats), and other chemical additives. Besides adding anti-inflammatory foods to your diet, you'll also want to avoid the following pro-inflammatory dietary culprits as much as possible:

- Refined sugar, processed fructose, and grains. As a general guideline, it's recommended to restrict your total fructose intake to 25 grams per day. If you're insulin or leptin resistant (have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, or are overweight), consider cutting that down to 15 grams per day until your insulin/leptin resistance has normalized
- Oxidized cholesterol (cholesterol that has gone rancid, such as that from overcooked, scrambled eggs). This is found in fried foods.
- Foods cooked at high temperatures, especially if cooked with vegetable oil (such as peanut, corn, and soy oil). Again, fried foods.
- Trans fats

Replacing processed foods with whole, ideally organic foods will automatically address most of these factors, especially if you eat a large portion of your food raw. Equally important is making sure you're regularly reseed your gut with beneficial bacteria, as mentioned above.