

How certain food fights inflammation

Eat well to be well

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The anti-inflammation diet is not a weight loss diet or a temporary diet. According to a nutrition coach, this diet teaches individuals to be mindful of what they consume.



DR. KAYCEE REYES

Admit it, a lot of us have a lovehate relationship with food. Depending on our mood, our hormones, our stress levels, or certain life events, we either eat to our heart's content or go on an extreme diet—it's a crazy cycle! We all know that food is important to be able to be at our best. But remember, what we eat can take a toll on our health too! So how can we ensure that we are eating the right kind of food to be at our healthiest and most productive? Is there a way to reduce inflammation, reverse the damage, or restart our health? Well, start your healthy relationship with food and your body with the anti-inflammatory diet.

Inflammation comes in two types. Acute inflammation is the more common one that is an immediate response to pain or trauma. Bruises, wounds, swelling, or an injury are some examples. On the other hand, it could also be chronic inflammation, wherein the body is repeatedly exposed to a stressor that slowly damages cells over time. While the pain or discomfort does not manifest immediately, this is what is said to cause various infections and diseases if not treated or detected early on. Constant exposure to pathogens and untreated acute inflammation are some of the common causes of chronic inflammation. Saps Uttam, an integrative nutrition coach, also adds that aside from this, food quality and one's lifestyle play a factor too. In particular, exposure to chronic stress, poor sleeping habits, and even emotional triggers may also contribute to chronic inflammation. That is why she advocates the anti-inflammatory diet with the goal of reducing inflammation, resetting the body, and maintaining one's optimum health by helping individuals make conscious decisions on what they eat and how they live day by day.

The anti-inflammatory diet is pretty straightforward—it means eliminating or eating fewer food items that cause inflammation. It has been long talked about by integrative medicine practitioner Dr. Andrew Weil. According to him, it is not a weight loss diet or a temporary diet. Saps Uttam adds that this diet teaches individuals to be mindful of what they consume. This differs from a plant-based diet that mainly focuses on health and

practicing farm to table consumption or a gluten-free diet that eliminates gluten to ease digestion and help the gut. It also slightly differs from the Mediterranean diet, which mainly aims for fresh food and healthy fats. Dr. Weil says that practicing an antiinflammatory diet includes

- consuming lots of fruits and vegetables by experimenting on different tastes and textures;
- having fiber-rich food such as whole grains, beans, and legumes;
- eating proteins from healthy plant sources such as nuts and soy (and beans too!), as well as high quality cheese and yogurt; and
- not forgetting Omega-3s of which fatty fish is a very good source.

An anti-inflammatory lifestyle is important too, and this involves:

- getting ample sleep and/or rest;
- maintaining the right body weight;
- reducing or eliminating alcohol and smoking; and
- move, move, move!

Of course, switching to an anti-inflammatory diet overnight is a challenge for most who have not been conscious of their dietary options or their lifestyle. Introduce it slowly, start becoming mindful of your choices, and best of all, listen to your body. As Saps Uttam says, “our body is always trying to keep you safe and it is always working for you, but it needs massive support from you and it is high time we learned to love the body we are in.”