- Diet / Inflammation

30 DAYS TO Anti-Inflammatory Diet

Diets than can help reduce inflammation

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Once you've worked out whether or not you have any food sensitivities, there are many different ways of eating that you can explore along with the anti-inflammatory diet. Here are a few...

The food you eat can have a significant impact on inflammation, either helping to keep it in check or making it worse. Understanding which dietary approaches can help reduce inflammation allows for more informed choices that support long-term health and wellbeing.



Mediterranean Diet

WHAT DOES THIS DIET LOOK LIKE?

The Mediterranean diet is often praised as one of the healthiest ways to eat, thanks to its focus on fresh, wholesome ingredients. Rooted in the traditional eating patterns of countries like Greece, Italy and Spain, this way of eating emphasises nutrient-rich foods that nourish the body and promote long-term health.

WHAT CAN YOU EAT AND WHAT SHOULD YOU AVOID?

The emphasis of this diet is to choose whole, nutrient dense foods while limiting overly processed foods and refined sugars.

Foods to include

- All fresh fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains like quinoa, bulgur and whole wheat
- Legumes, such as lentils and chickpeas
- All nuts and seeds
- Extra-virgin olive oil
- Fatty fish (salmon, sardines, mackerel)
- All herbs and spices

Foods to avoid

- All ultra-processed foods and drinks that have been sweetened
- Highly processed meats, such as sausages, bacon
- Excessive red meat



HOW DOES THIS DIET HELP FIGHT INFLAMMATION?

The Mediterranean diet helps reduce inflammation with omega-3s from fatty fish, such as salmon and sardines. Extra-virgin olive oil, nuts and colourful fruits and vegetables provide polyphenols and antioxidants to combat oxidative stress. This fibre-rich diet also supports a diverse gut microbiome, crucial for regulating inflammation and immune function.



Dairy-Free Diet

WHAT DOES THIS DIET LOOK LIKE?

A dairy-free diet eliminates all forms of dairy, including milk, cheese, yoghurt, butter and cream. This also excludes products that contain hidden dairy ingredients, such as certain baked goods, sauces and processed foods. Instead, people following this diet turn to plant-based alternatives to milk and yoghurt.

WHAT CAN YOU EAT AND WHAT SHOULD YOU AVOID?

Foods to include

- Plant-based milks, such as nut, soy, oat – ideally fortified with calcium and vitamin D
- Dairy-free yoghurts (coconut and soy-based options)
- Nutrient-dense nuts and seeds, such as almonds, walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseeds
- Fruits and vegetables
- Lean proteins – poultry, fish, eggs, legumes, tofu and tempeh
- Whole grains – quinoa, brown rice, oats, bulgur wheat
- Dairy-free spreads and oils (avocado, olive oil, nut butters)

Foods to avoid

- Cow's milk and products made from it – cheese, butter, cream, yoghurt
- Foods with hidden dairy – many processed snacks, soups, salad dressings
- Whey and casein proteins, which are derived from milk and commonly found in protein powders and some packaged foods



HOW DOES THIS DIET HELP FIGHT INFLAMMATION?

Dairy can trigger inflammation in some people, particularly those with lactose intolerance or sensitivity to casein and whey. Symptoms may include bloating, digestive discomfort and diarrhoea. Some individuals with inflammatory conditions find that eliminating dairy helps reduce symptoms, but this can vary based on personal tolerance and gut health.

Gluten-Free Diet

WHAT DOES THIS DIET LOOK LIKE?

A gluten-free diet excludes all foods made with gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. This means avoiding common staples like bread, pasta, cereals and baked goods unless they're specifically made without gluten. Instead, the focus is on naturally gluten-free whole foods and specially designed gluten-free alternatives.

WHAT CAN YOU EAT AND WHAT SHOULD YOU AVOID?

Foods to include

- Gluten-free grains – quinoa, rice, buckwheat, millet, amaranth, corn
- All fruits and vegetables
- Lean proteins – meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and plant-based proteins such as tofu and legumes
- All nuts and seeds

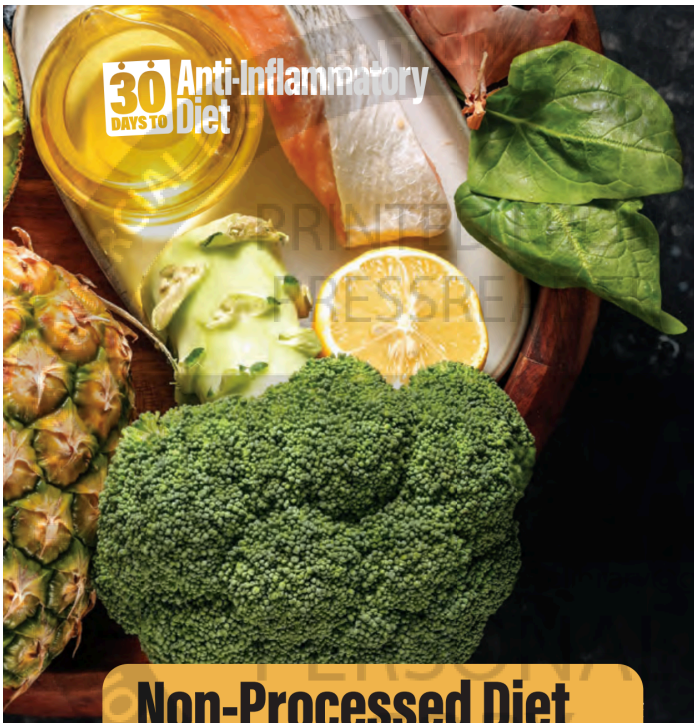
Foods to avoid

- Grains containing gluten – wheat, including varieties like spelt, barley and rye
- Common gluten-containing foods, such as regular bread, pasta, cereals, baked goods, crackers
- Hidden sources of gluten – sauces, dressings, soy sauce, and even some processed meats

HOW DOES THIS DIET HELP FIGHT INFLAMMATION?

For people with coeliac disease, eating gluten sets off an autoimmune reaction that harms the small intestine, making it harder to absorb nutrients and causing inflammation. Those with non-coeliac gluten sensitivity may also struggle with bloating, fatigue and joint discomfort due to mild inflammation. Removing gluten from the diet can help ease digestive issues and support gut health in these individuals.

However, for those without gluten intolerance, there is little evidence that cutting out gluten reduces inflammation or offers health benefits.



Non-Processed Diet

WHAT DOES THIS DIET LOOK LIKE?

A non-processed diet focuses on eating whole, natural foods while avoiding ultra-processed foods that are high in added sugars, unhealthy fats and artificial additives. This approach prioritises fresh, nutrient-dense ingredients that nourish the body, support gut health and help to maintain overall wellbeing.

WHAT CAN YOU EAT AND WHAT SHOULD YOU AVOID?

Foods to include

- All fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains – brown rice, quinoa, oats, spelt
- Legumes – lentils, beans, chickpeas
- All nuts and seeds
- Fresh meat, fish and seafood
- Healthy fats – avocados, extra-virgin olive oil, oily fish

Foods to avoid

- All ultra-processed foods and drinks
- Processed meats – bacon, sausages and deli meats



HOW DOES THIS DIET HELP FIGHT INFLAMMATION?

Ultra-processed foods often contain ingredients that may contribute to inflammation, such as added sugars and artificial additives. Many UPFs also lack the protective nutrients, fibre and healthy fats found in whole foods, which help regulate inflammation.

Plant-Based Diet

WHAT DOES THIS DIET LOOK LIKE?

A plant-based diet focuses on whole, minimally processed plant foods. It includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds and whole grains. While some people on a plant-based diet still consume small amounts of animal products, others choose to avoid them entirely, following a vegan diet.

WHAT CAN YOU EAT AND WHAT SHOULD YOU AVOID?

Foods to include

- All fruits and vegetables
- Legumes – lentils, chickpeas, beans and peas
- All nuts and seeds
- Whole grains – quinoa, brown rice, oats, barley
- Plant-based milks – nut, soy, oat milk, ideally fortified with calcium and vitamin D

Foods to avoid

- Red meat, poultry, fish and seafood
- All dairy products and eggs



HOW DOES THIS DIET HELP FIGHT INFLAMMATION?

A plant-based diet supports inflammation control with antioxidants, fibre and healthy fats, while reducing pro-inflammatory compounds. Antioxidants in berries, green tea and carrots combat oxidative stress, while fibre promotes gut health and short-chain fatty acid production, reducing inflammation. Choosing nuts, seeds and olive oil over saturated fats from animal products further helps lower inflammatory markers.





Low-Carb Diet

WHAT DOES THIS DIET LOOK LIKE?

A low-carb diet is based on reducing carbohydrate intake while prioritising protein and healthy fats. This approach naturally limits foods that can contribute to blood sugar spikes. Unlike extreme low-carb approaches such as keto, a general low-carb diet can be more flexible, allowing for a moderate intake of slow-releasing carbohydrates from sources like non-starchy vegetables and some legumes.

WHAT CAN YOU EAT AND WHAT SHOULD YOU AVOID?

Foods to include

- Lean meats – chicken, turkey, lean cuts of beef and lamb
- Fatty fish – salmon, sardines, mackerel
- Eggs
- Non-starchy vegetables – leafy greens, peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, courgettes
- Nuts and seeds – almonds, walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseeds
- Healthy fats – extra-virgin olive oil, avocado, coconut oil

Foods to avoid

- Foods and drinks high in sugar – cakes, biscuits, sweets, soda
- Grains – bread, pasta, rice, cereals
- Starchy vegetables – potatoes, sweetcorn, parsnips
- Highly processed snacks – crisps, processed protein bars



HOW DOES THIS DIET HELP FIGHT INFLAMMATION?

A low-carb diet has been shown to have anti-inflammatory effects, largely because it helps regulate blood sugar levels. Research has also found that low-carb diets may help reduce levels of C-reactive protein (CRP), a key marker of inflammation in the body. Additionally, by prioritising anti-inflammatory foods such as omega-3-rich fish, nuts, seeds and olive oil, this approach supports overall health while keeping inflammation in check.

Intermittent Fasting

WHAT DOES THIS DIET LOOK LIKE?

Intermittent fasting (IF) focuses on when you eat, alternating between eating and fasting periods to support metabolism and cellular repair. Common methods include 16:8 (fasting for 16 hours, eating within eight), 5:2 (normal eating for five days, restricted intake for two), and alternate day fasting. IF can help regulate hunger, energy levels and inflammation, making it a flexible alternative to traditional diets.

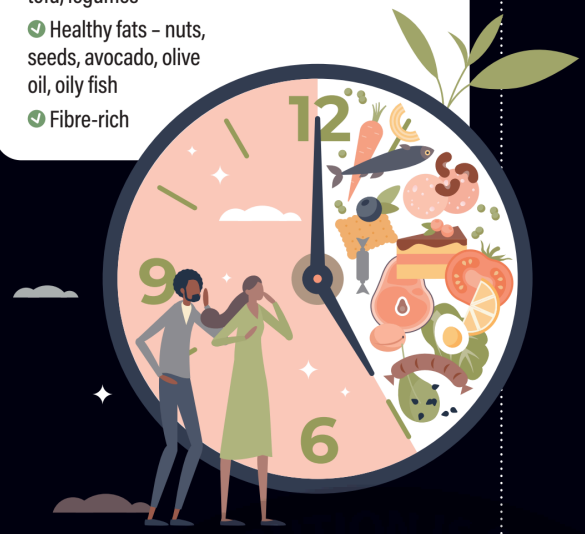
WHAT CAN YOU EAT AND WHAT SHOULD YOU AVOID?

Foods to include

- All fruit and vegetables
- High-quality proteins – fish, eggs, poultry, lean meats, tofu, legumes
- Healthy fats – nuts, seeds, avocado, olive oil, oily fish
- Fibre-rich

Foods to avoid

- All ultra-processed foods
- Food and drinks high in added sugars



HOW DOES THIS DIET HELP FIGHT INFLAMMATION?

Intermittent fasting (IF) may help reduce inflammation by triggering autophagy, a process where the body removes damaged cells and reduces oxidative stress. Research suggests IF can lower inflammatory markers like C-reactive protein (CRP) and IL-6, which are linked to chronic diseases. IF may also benefit gut health by giving the digestive system a break and supporting a more diverse gut microbiome.

Reducing inflammation through diet involves choosing whole, nutrient-dense foods and avoiding processed, pro-inflammatory ingredients.