- Habit / Inflammation

30 DAYS TO Anti-Inflammatory Diet

6 BONUS HEALTHY HABITS

to help keep inflammation at bay

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You've discovered 30 healthy habits now, but we couldn't resist giving you a few more. Some may apply to you, some might not, but all will help you to maintain an anti-inflammatory lifestyle

1 MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT

There is a direct link between obesity and chronic inflammation, with the two forming a vicious cycle. Obesity fuels the inflammation, and the inflammation causes obesity through increased leptin in the blood stream, which stops your body realising that it's had enough to eat. This means that keeping to a healthy weight is a really important part of keeping inflammation under control.

As we all know, that can be easier said than done. The key is to start slowly and gradually increase exercise and lifestyle changes that you can stick to, rather than going for a crash diet. Exercise and a good diet go hand in hand in maintaining a healthy weight, and they'll make you feel better and, of course, help lower inflammation. If the going gets tough, don't forget that inflammation is often the problem, not your will power!



2 GIVE UP SMOKING

If you're a smoker, every cigarette you puff causes inflammation throughout your body. The more cigarettes and the longer you smoke for, the greater the inflammation will be.

Cigarette smoke contains thousands of toxins and cancer-causing chemicals. These cause your body to release inflammatory proteins called cytokines, which trigger an inflammatory response all over the body, not just in the lungs.

We all know by now that smoking causes cancer, particularly lung cancer, but it is also linked to dozens of other serious conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, heart disease, strokes, asthma and diabetes. The good news is that inflammation starts reducing quickly when you stop smoking and you'll start feeling the benefits in just a few days. What's more, research shows that inflammation levels will gradually reduce back to your baseline within five years.

If you're thinking about giving up, why not try the free NHS app available from *nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking*.



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3 LOOK AFTER YOUR TEETH

Inflammation is a key factor in gum disease. When plaque builds up on your teeth, it irritates the gums, causing them to become inflamed. This makes them prone to infection, from mild gingivitis to severe periodontitis, with symptoms including painful, swollen and bleeding gums, receding gums and eventually loose teeth. What's more, studies show that people with diseased gums are more likely to develop dementia.

The best approach to stop inflammation in your gums is prevention. Brush your teeth at least twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and spit, don't rinse. Use interdental brushes or floss to clean between your teeth and visit your dentist regularly for check-ups and cleanings. In terms of lifestyle, it's best to eat a healthy diet without too much sugar and you should definitely avoid smoking, which is a major risk factor for gum disease.



4 GIVE YOUR HOME A SPRING CLEAN

Did you know that dust and mould lurking in your home can be more than just unsightly and irritating – they can actually cause inflammation?

If your home has black mould, you are more likely to suffer from respiratory illnesses, infections and allergies. Mould loves moisture, so rooms that suffer from condensation problems are often where it first appears. Remove it with a cloth that you throw away afterwards, then wipe down the area with a fungicidal wash (following the instructions carefully, of course). It's important to wear gloves and a face mask when removing mould. To stop it coming back, you'll need to fix the moisture problem.

Dust isn't quite as bad, but if you're allergic to the mites that love household dust, you can experience allergic reactions such as asthma, eczema and rhinitis. Luckily, when you remove the dust, you remove the mites, so vacuuming and washing your bedding regularly should go a long way to fixing the problem.

5 GO RAW



We've already discovered that the best ways to harness the power of vegetables to keep inflammation at bay turns out to be fast but gentle – quick cooking using gentle methods – but did you know that you get the most benefit (and a good crunch) from some vegetables if you eat them raw? This doesn't apply across the cutting board however. Raw tomatoes, for example, can be delicious and healthy, but cooking them boosts the amount of lycopene, which is a potent antioxidant that lowers your risk of cancer and heart attacks.

When it comes down to it, the main thing is to make sure we eat a variety of vegetables – and plenty of them!

6 NATURAL CLEANING AND BEAUTY WARES

Every day, we use beauty and cleaning products without knowing what's in them. Particularly if you suffer from skin inflammation, making your own versions can be a quick and easy way to use ingredients that you know won't exacerbate the problem. People have been cleaning things for thousands of years, well before the advent of colourful bottles of sprays, so we know what works well. Two stand-out cleaners are white vinegar, a natural disinfectant that's great for getting rid of gummy build-ups and hard water stains, and bicarbonate of (baking) soda, which is great for absorbing bad odours, as well as sprinkling on a damp cloth to use as a surface cleaner.

To make beauty products, why not start with a honey mask? Rub warm honey on your face and leave it for 30 minutes. Simple. To remove oils from hair, mix one part white vinegar with five parts water and rinse your hair with it after washing out the shampoo.



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