- Foods / Inflammation

30 DAYS TO Anti-Inflammatory Diet

TOP 20 FOODS to fight inflammation

Want to know which ingredients will help to supercharge your anti-inflammatory diet? Here are 20 to add to your shopping list...

Words: Charlie Watson



Blueberries

Blueberries have the highest antioxidant supply of all fresh fruit. Some studies have shown that anthocyanin, the main antioxidant found in blueberries, can help to fight heart disease.
Serving suggestion: 4 heaped tbsp.
Best way to eat: fresh or frozen.
How to add to your diet: add to yoghurts, porridge, desserts, smoothies, or savoury dishes like salads, BBQ sauces and meat dishes.

Sardines

Another great source of omega-3 fatty acids. Our bodies break down fatty acids into compounds called resolvins and protectins that help manage inflammation by limiting inflammatory response.
Serving suggestion: 1-2 portions of oily fish per week (about 140g).
Best way to cook: pan fry, grill or bake with lemon or something acidic to balance the rich, fatty flavours.
How to add to your diet: tinned sardines are a great cupboard staple to add to pasta dishes, toast or salad.

Dark leafy green veg

Leafy greens – including spinach, kale and spring greens – that contain a plethora of antioxidants, including vitamins A, C and K, protect cells from free radical damage.
Serving suggestion: 4 heaped tbsp.
Best way to cook: steaming or microwaving protects the nutrients compared to boiling (unless you use the cooking water).
How to add to your diet: stir into soups, salads, stews, salads and even smoothies. Spinach freezes really well and can be used directly from frozen to save you having a soggy bag in your fridge.

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Extra-Virgin Olive Oil

Studies have shown that oleic acid, the main fatty acid found in olive oil, has anti-inflammatory properties and has been found to reduce C-reactive Protein. Additionally, olive oil is packed with biologically active antioxidants, the key being oleocanthal that has been shown to work similarly to ibuprofen.
Serving suggestion: 1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil – extra-virgin has the highest amount of polyphenols and antioxidants.
Best way to cook: olive oil has a relatively low smoke point compared to other cooking oils, so it may be best to use it raw.
How to add to your diet: use in salad dressings, drizzle on soups, pastas, pizza, meats, fish or even in desserts if you want to try out something new.

Green Tea

This herbal tea is packed full of antioxidants, the main polyphenol is called epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGGG). It can reduce the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines, and suppress the expression of certain genes and proteins that are a cause of inflammation.
Serving suggestion: no more than 8 cups per day.
Best way to drink: steep the tea for 1-2 minutes.
How to add to your diet: swap out a cup of coffee or black tea for green tea instead – but watch out for the caffeine content!

Almonds

Almonds are one of the best sources of vitamin E that has been linked to lower rates of heart disease, Alzheimer's and cancer, plus they are a good source of antioxidants.
Serving suggestion: 60g or roughly 46 raw almonds.
Best way to consume: most of the antioxidants in almonds are found in the brown layer of skin, so blanched almonds have lower anti-inflammatory properties.
How to add to your diet: eat as a snack alongside a protein source such as cheese or yoghurt, chop and add to salads, blend into soups or smoothies.

Broccoli

Broccoli is particularly high in the antioxidant sulforaphane. This fights inflammation in the body by reducing levels of cytokines and NF-kB, a key mediator of inflammatory responses. NF-kB is increasingly being seen as playing a crucial role in cancer initiation and progression.
Serving suggestion: 75g broccoli.
Best way to cook: steaming your veg maintains the most nutrients within the veg.
How to add to your diet: add it into stir-fries, soups, salads, smoothies or eat raw with a dip.

Trout

As an oily fish, trout is a good dietary source of omega-3 fatty acids. A recent study found that omega-3 can reduce inflammation by increasing the concentration of special molecule mediators that regulate specific compounds in the blood.
Serving suggestion: 1-2 portions of oily fish per week (140g).
Best way to cook: steamed, roasted, pan-fried, baked or smoked.
How to add to your diet: use it in traybakes, salads, stir-fries, or stirred into risottos or pasta dishes.





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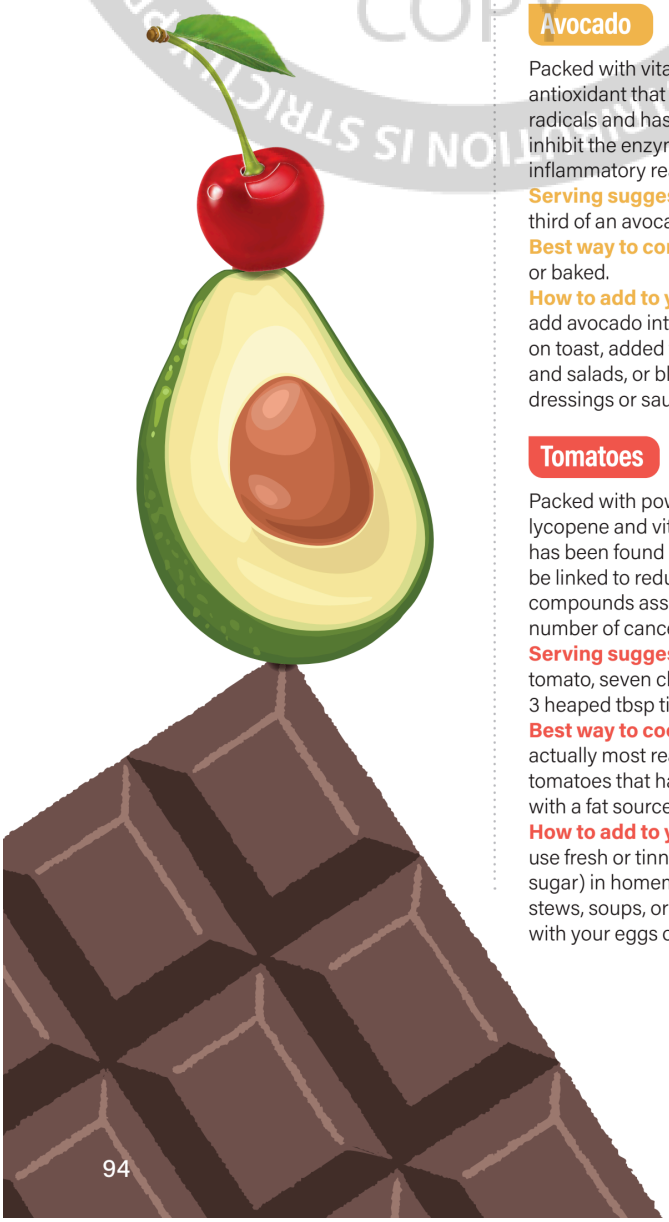
Cherries

A good source of polyphenols and vitamin C, studies have shown that consumption of sweet or tart cherries can reduce inflammation by preventing/reducing oxidative stress.
Serving suggestion: studies included very high levels of intake for anti-inflammatory benefits, which are unrealistic for day-to-day life, but a standard portion is 14 cherries.
Best way to cook: eat fresh or frozen, dried or cherry juice – just not maraschino cherries, which are full of added sugar.
How to add to your diet: add them to salads, porridge, smoothies, desserts or drinks, or make cherry jam or compote.



Dark Chocolate

Dark chocolate contains flavonoids and antioxidants. The flavonoids in dark chocolate can help maintain the health of endothelial cells (the cells that line the arteries). Antioxidants interact with free radicals from the body cells and neutralise the damage caused by oxidation.
Serving suggestion: 20g of 70 per cent dark chocolate.
Best way to consume: melted or eat it as is.
How to add to your diet: enjoy with a portion of fruit, Greek yoghurt, or made into hot chocolate. Try to avoid having it too close to bedtime, as its caffeine content can disrupt your sleep.

Avocado

Packed with vitamin E, a potent antioxidant that neutralises free radicals and has been shown to inhibit the enzyme involved with inflammatory reactions.
Serving suggestion: 50g – about a third of an avocado.
Best way to consume: eaten raw or baked.
How to add to your diet: add avocado into burgers, smashed on toast, added to sandwiches and salads, or blended into salad dressings or sauces.

Tomatoes

Packed with powerful antioxidants lycopene and vitamin C. Lycopene has been found in several studies to be linked to reducing inflammatory compounds associated with a number of cancers.
Serving suggestion: One medium tomato, seven cherry tomatoes, 3 heaped tbsp tinned tomatoes.
Best way to cook: lycopene is actually most readily available from tomatoes that have been cooked with a fat source.
How to add to your diet: use fresh or tinned (with no added sugar) in homemade pasta sauces, stews, soups, or have it for breakfast with your eggs on toast.

Pistachios

These nuts are full of antioxidants, particularly lutein and zeaxanthin that are important for eye health. These compounds help protect our eyes from blue light damage and age-related macular degeneration. They also contain polyphenols and tocopherols that may help protect us from heart disease and cancer.
Serving suggestion: 30g – roughly 50 pistachios.
Best way to consume: eating them unpeeled and unsalted is the healthiest form.
How to add to your diet: add to yoghurts, porridges, mix into cakes and muffins, pestos and in other pasta dishes.

Pomegranate

Pomegranates contain the potent polyphenol ellagitannins found in both the peel and seeds. These antioxidants help reduce build up of cholesterol and plaque in our blood vessels, and prevent thickening of artery walls. Early studies have found that the antioxidants in pomegranate may help to prevent some cancers.
Serving suggestion: half a fresh pomegranate or 150ml juice.
Best way to consume: juiced or whole.
How to add to your diet: drink a portion of juice, sprinkle pomegranate seeds on your yoghurt, porridge, salads or meat dishes.

Chia Seeds

Chia seeds are packed with alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), an essential omega-3 fatty acid that the body cannot produce on its own and therefore needs to be consumed from the foods we eat.
Serving suggestion: 2½ tbsp, which also provides 10g fibre.
Best way to cook: soak them to make them more easily digestible and some nutrients more bio-available. Soak for between 30 minutes and 2 hours before eating – you can store soaked chia seeds in the fridge for up to 5 days.
How to add to your diet: soak in coconut milk to make chia pudding, add to porridge, granola, baked goods, smoothies, fruit salads or even just to plain water for a hydration boost.

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Salmon

Wild salmon is one of the most anti-inflammatory foods you can consume. Salmon is packed with omega-3 fatty acids that have been associated with reductions in levels of C-reactive protein, a key inflammatory marker.
Serving suggestion: one to two portions of oily fish per week (about 140g).
Best way to cook: poached, steamed, roasted, smoked or raw (sushi grade only).
How to add to your diet: Using hot smoked or poached salmon fillets is a quick and easy way to add it to salads, risottos and pastas. Smoked salmon is a great addition to breakfast or lunch.

Oranges

Oranges and their juice contain a flavonoid called narirutin, a type of polyphenol that may help to lower cholesterol and reduce obesity risk. They contain vitamin C, an antioxidant that can modulate the DNA binding action of NF-kB, which is involved with inflammation development and progress in the body.
Serving suggestion: one large orange, two small satsuma, 150ml fresh orange juice.
Best way to consume: fresh (not juice from concentrate).
How to add to your diet: add it to yoghurt, salads, dressings, baking, smoothies, or enjoy as a snack with a portion of protein. Vitamin C also helps absorption of iron, so try adding some orange juice to your next beef dish!

Strawberries

Strawberries contain a number of polyphenol compounds, such as anthocyanins and ellagic acid, known to have anti-inflammatory effects. Studies have linked increased berry consumption with lower risk of diabetes, heart disease and Alzheimer's.
Serving suggestion: a portion is about 7 strawberries.
Best way to consume: eating them fresh maximises fibre intake.
How to add to your diet: add to yoghurt, porridge, smoothies, salads or even make them into a strawberry soup.



Turmeric

The main active ingredient in turmeric is curcumin, a polyphenol with both antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that neutralise free radicals and can shield cells from damage.
Serving suggestion: ½-1½ tsp dried root powder.
Best way to cook: as fresh turmeric root or dried powdered turmeric – there isn't enough evidence on the safety or effectiveness of turmeric supplements, so stick with adding it to your food/drinks for now.
How to add to your diet: make a cup of turmeric herbal tea, add it to curries, soups, smoothies and salad dressings.

Walnuts

Walnuts are the only nut that provides a significant source of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), a precursor to the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA found in oily fish. Researchers found they lower C-reactive protein, an inflammatory marker linked to increased risk of cardiovascular disease and arthritis.
Serving suggestion: because of their high fat content, the British Heart Foundation (BHF) recommend limiting serving sizes to 30g.
How to add to your diet: stir them into porridge, overnight oats, baked goods such as muffins or banana bread, or add them to veggie side dishes or salads.

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