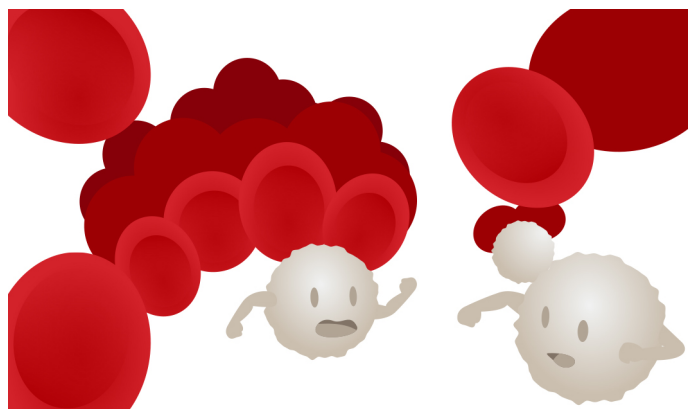


Inflammation: What You Need to Know



It is becoming increasingly clear that chronic inflammation is implicated in many serious illnesses, including cardiovascular disease, stroke, many cancers, rheumatoid arthritis and Alzheimer's disease.

What is Inflammation?

Inflammation is the body's response to infection, injury or irritant. The body responds by sending an army of inflammatory cells to remove the stimulus and initiate the healing process.

- Acute inflammation is a short-term response that can last minutes to days. The chemical mediators responsible for the vascular and cellular changes allow the flow of white blood cells and plasma to the site of injury. This can cause intense but temporary inflammation.
- Prolonged (a.k.a. chronic) inflammation occurs when the cause of inflammation persists. This results in constant low levels of inflammation and can lead to serious health problems. These problems can include the buildup of fatty deposits in the

inner lining of the arteries, which increases the risk for a stroke or heart attack.

Although inflammation is a healthy and necessary part of your autoimmune response system, persistent inflammation that serves no purpose damages the body and causes illness.

What are the Risk Factors for Chronic Inflammation?

High blood pressure, stress, lack of exercise, genetic predisposition, cigarette smoking, high blood glucose levels, poor eating, and obesity all contribute to inflammatory conditions.

How Does Your Diet Affect Inflammation?

The average American diet includes far too many processed and fast foods. We also don't eat enough foods that are rich in omega-3 fatty acids* or enough fruits and vegetables. These foods have vital anti-inflammatory properties.

Foods such as french fries, pasta, cheeseburgers, fried chicken, and bread all provoke an excessive inflammatory response within your body. Other foods, such as salmon, spinach, walnuts, carrots, berries, brown rice, and olive oil, all fight bodily inflammation. If you eat an abundance of foods that provoke chronic inflammation, then you will be more likely to develop chronic illnesses.

By Lenore Shamah, MS, RD

*All found in cold-water fish, nuts and seeds.

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