



## **Chronic Inflammation: The Silent Health Bandit**

*Written by Jill Grunewald and published in mix magazine*



It seems that everywhere you turn, more and more nutritional guidance is pointing to evidence that keeping inflammation in the body at bay is the key to a long, healthy life, free of degenerative disease. We're not talking about what you experience when you sprain your ankle or burn your hand; we're talking about "silent inflammation," a term coined by Dr. Barry Sears, Ph.D., author of *The Anti-Inflammation Zone* and one of the world's leading medical researchers and experts on the link between chronic inflammation and disease.

Inflammation is typically thought of as a response to injury or a germ or pathogen attack, characterized by pain, swelling, heat, and redness, and is the body's mechanism of acquiring immune activity and nourishment to the affected area. Alternately, inflammation has a dark side and can be destructive to our health, as silent inflammation occurs when the body's innate immune response goes awry. According to Dr. Sears, "Yes, your body needs to have a functional inflammatory system to survive, but it also needs to shut down this process once the invader is thwarted or the wound is healed."

### **If I Can't Feel it, Then it Must Not Exist**

Dr. Sears states, "Silent inflammation is simply inflammation that falls below the threshold of perceived pain. That's what makes it so dangerous. You don't take any steps to stop it as it smolders for years, if not decades, eventually erupting into what we call chronic disease." Alzheimer's sufferers, for example, don't experience pain in the brain.

Degenerative diseases, including heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's (including other forms of dementia), and diabetes, as well their kissing cousin, obesity, expend the majority of our health care resources in this country and possess a powerful inflammatory component. The onset of autoimmune disorders, such as multiple sclerosis, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, and Hashimoto's thyroiditis, are, according to Dr. Sears, "clear-cut examples of out-of-control inflammation." I like to think of chronic inflammation as an army of pistol-packing outlaws roaming our bodies and robbing us of our health.

The primary causes of inflammation are inadequate water intake, prescription drugs, a diet high in sugars and refined carbohydrates, artificial and chemical-laden foods, environmental toxins, stress, a sedentary lifestyle, undiagnosed food allergies or sensitivities, and hormone imbalances.

Free radicals are unstable molecules that damage cells and cause premature aging and are primarily generated from environmental stressors and a diet high in processed foods. These rabble rousers add fuel to the inflammatory fire but can fortunately and very effectively be counteracted with antioxidant-rich foods.

# HEALTHFUL ELEMENTS



## How to Tame the Smoking Gun

One of the most powerful, healing, and nourishing actions we can take to be at optimum health and ward off degenerative disease is to eat an anti-inflammatory diet. It is not a diet in the customary sense (who wants to diet?), although the majority of people who opt for this lifestyle do steadily lose weight. Many have lost a significant amount of weight, simply by eating their fill of anti-inflammatory foods, no willpower necessary.

In addition to the right foods, supplementing with ultra-refined fish oil (omega-3 fatty acids) is one of the best ways to get control of silent inflammation. According to Dr. Andrew Weil, world-renowned leader and pioneer in the field of integrative medicine, “[An] anti-inflammatory diet gives you a healthy balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. Most people consume an excess of omega-6 fatty acids from which the body synthesizes hormones that promote inflammation. These fats are found in oil-rich seeds and the oils extracted from them, which are used in almost all snack foods and fast foods. Omega-3 fatty acids have an anti-inflammatory effect and are found in oily fish, walnuts, flax, hemp, and to a smaller degree in soy and sea vegetables. In addition to correcting the balance between omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids, the anti-inflammatory diet eliminates consumption of margarine, vegetable shortening, and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, all of which promote inflammation.”

The great news is that reversing premature aging and halting the onset of chronic, degenerative disease is...pretty easy. You just have to want to do it. There is no strict diet. There are no costly pharmaceuticals with sketchy side effects. You can still enjoy your favorite food vices, in moderation. According to Dr. Sears, “The day you start fighting silent inflammation is the day that you start to slow down the aging process and all the chronic diseases that come with it.”

## Basic anti-inflammatory principles:

- Eliminate processed foods, including fast food, and consume only fresh, whole foods in their natural state.
- Try to consume quality protein, complex carbohydrates, and healthful fats at each meal. In other words, [keep your blood sugar as stable as possible](#).
- Animal protein should be organic, sustainably raised, and from as clean of a source as possible.
- Greatly reduce or (preferably) eliminate sugar and refined flour intake.
- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables low to moderate on the glycemic index.
- Strictly avoid high fructose corn syrup.
- Eat full fat dairy in moderation; fat-free and low-fat dairy products have been overprocessed and are not a natural food.
- Eat avocados and nuts, especially almonds, walnuts, and cashews.
- Use organic extra virgin olive oil, ghee, or coconut oil as your primary cooking oil.
- Strictly avoid margarine, vegetable shortening, and products made with partially hydrogenated oils.
- Consume omega-3 fatty acids daily. Eat salmon, sardines packed in water or olive oil, black cod, or herring twice weekly and take a fish oil supplement on the days you don't eat fish. Make sure that your fish oil is free of heavy metals (molecularly-distilled).

# HEALTHFUL ELEMENTS



- Make ginger and turmeric a regular part of your diet. [Turmeric](#) is one of the most anti-inflammatory compounds on the planet. Consider taking in supplemental form. (**Note:** Turmeric is best absorbed in the presence of black pepper, so find a supplement that has both. My recommendation: [Gaia Turmeric Supreme](#))
- Drink wine sparingly.
- Drink tea instead of coffee.
- Stay hydrated. Drink 6-8 glasses of water per day.

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