



By: Farhan Tahir MD,  
FACR, ABIHM

Inflammation is our immune system's response to injury and infection. Inflammation becomes harmful to our body if it remains unchecked and prolonged. There are certain biomarkers that can indicate active inflammation in our body such as CRP (C-reactive protein) and ESR (erythrocyte sedimentation rate). There is overwhelming evidence from thousands of studies confirming a strong link between inflammation and development of chronic diseases such as coronary artery disease and diabetes mellitus. Chronic inflammation is also the cause of autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, which are hallmarks of inflammatory diseases. Now, researchers believe that inflammation causes cancers and even Alzheimer's dementia.

#### **Inflammation and Nutrition**

Our diet can be major contributor to inflammation in our body. Understanding the difference between healthy and unhealthy choices is important.

#### **Understand the different dietary fats**

Saturated fats and trans fats increase inflammation.

A Mediterranean-style diet is rich in monounsaturated fats, which reduce inflammation. The main anti-inflammatory properties of a Mediterranean diet are attributed to high consumption of olive oil, fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans, fish, and whole grains as well as moderate consumption of red wine. These nutrients are rich in essential fatty acids and high amounts of omega 3 fatty acids (FA), including alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), which can help reduce inflammation. Unfortunately, the standard American diet (aka SAD) delivers an imbalanced essential fatty acid ratio. In fact, omega 6 FAs, which cause inflammation, are about 15-20 times higher in our daily diet than omega 3s. Foods rich in Omega 3s are walnuts, canola oil, fish, and fish oil.

#### **Avoid simple sugars**

Eating food high in simple sugars leads to dysregulation of the immune system and causes immunosuppression for 2-4 hours after consumption. Sugary foods facilitate bacterial overgrowth in the small bowel, which is pro-inflammatory. For example, simple sugars and complex carbs that digest faster such as refined white flour and white potatoes cause this overgrowth. In addition, use of artificial sweeteners has been associated with bacterial overgrowth.

#### **Avoid harmful fats**

Foods rich in animal-based fat, such as processed meat and fried foods, contribute to production of arachidonic acid and saturated fats, which cause inflammation, so avoid high-fat dairy and

animal fat; use fat-free milk and dairy products instead.

#### **Avoid allergens**

Certain processed foods carry a heavy burden of allergens, which may form immune complexes and inflammation.

#### **Avoid refined products without fiber**

A lack of fiber in the diet reduces the GI tract's ability to get rid of toxins, which also contributes to inflammation in our bodies.

#### **Don't miss out on phytonutrients**

Insufficient phytonutrients in the diet can be deleterious to your health. They are primarily found in fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds which act as anti-inflammatory agents and antioxidants.

#### **Get plenty of vitamin D**

Its deficiency causes inflammation, promotes autoimmunity and expedites progression of inflammatory conditions such as Rheumatoid arthritis.

#### **Keep your fatty acid supply in balance**

An imbalance between omega 6 and omega 3 fatty acids and insufficiencies of omega 3s can lead to

increased inflammation, while an excess of omega 6s, saturated fats, and trans fats leads to inflammation in the body.

#### **Watch your magnesium levels**

Magnesium deficiency is seen in 20% to 40% of most "industrialized" populations.

#### **Consider supplements and spices**

I suggest that my patients add the following supplements to their diets: omega 3s, antioxidants, vitamin D, minerals, and probiotics. Here are the amounts:

- Vitamin D: up to 2000 IU/day
- Probiotics: 5-15 billion twice a day
- Vitamin C: 500 mg/day
- Vitamin E: 400 IU of natural mixed tocopherols
- Selenium: 200 mcg/day
- Folic acid: 800 mcg/day
- Calcium citrate: 500-1000 mg/day for women only
- Fish oil containing both EPA and DHA (in capsule or liquid form): 2000-3000 mg/day
- Eat ginger, garlic, and turmeric or take in supplemental form
- Coenzyme Q10: up to 60-100 mg/day

- Alpha-linolenic acid: 100 to 400 mg/day (Consult your physician before starting any supplements.)

#### **Hydrate**

Drink pure water, tea, very diluted fruit juice, and/or water with lemon to keep hydrated throughout the day.

#### **Avoid Emotional Stress**

Emotional stress leads to suppression of the immune system, promotes inflammation, and impairs wound healing.

#### **Meditate and Enjoy**

Relax, meditate, and enjoy life. Keep your attitude positive and optimistic.

Dr. Farhan Tahir, MD, is board certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine, Rheumatology and Integrative & Holistic Medicine. He is a member of the American College of Rheumatology and founder of Pennsylvania's first and only integrative rheumatology practice. He lives in Bucks County with his wife and three young boys. For a personal integrative consultation, call 267-685-6070 or visit [www.RheumPA.com](http://www.RheumPA.com).

These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. The products mentioned are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

## Food for Thought and Wellness



Rheumatoid Arthritis • Lupus • Sjögren • Scleroderma • Vasculitis • Myositis  
Polymyalgia • Osteoarthritis • Gout • Osteoporosis • Fibromyalgia

Call: 267.685.6070 | Fax: 888-300-8112 | Online Appointment | Online Referral

[www.RheumPA.com](http://www.RheumPA.com)

Makefield Executive Quarters  
301 Oxford Valley Road, Suite 404  
Yardley, PA 19067

Abington Health Center — Blue Bell  
721 Arbor Way, Suite 103  
Blue Bell, PA 19422

267.685.6070 | [info@rheumpa.com](mailto:info@rheumpa.com)