

HOW TO REDUCE INFLAMMATION

For optimal health, try to minimize inflammation in the body. This is especially important if you are already overweight, as excess body fat can also cause elevated inflammation.

Dietary Changes

One of the key causes of chronic low-grade inflammation is a poor diet. Inflammation in the body is increased by consumption of processed foods, refined carbohydrates such as white flour, reduced levels of exercise and exposure to chemicals such as preservatives, bulking agents, artificial food colourings and flavourings.

Increased intake of anti-inflammatory foods and reduced intake of pro-inflammatory foods will reduce chronic low-grade inflammation. A diet which is low in processed carbs and high in antioxidants such as fruits/vegetables is recommended to reduce or prevent inflammation. Anti-inflammatory foods include berries, avocados, mushrooms, green tea, turmeric, dark cocoa.

Foods that cause inflammation, for example foods which are high in added sugar, trans fats, refined carbohydrates, processed meat and should be avoided.

In addition, a change in the balance of omega-3 and omega-6 in your diet can reduce inflammation. These are essential fatty acids which the body cannot make and are therefore required in our diets. However, omega-3 fatty acids are anti-inflammatory whereas omega-6 fatty acids are pro-inflammatory and a healthy ratio in our diet is approximately 1:1. As we are now eating more processed foods we tend to consume far too many omega-6 fatty acids and only a small amount of omega-3.

By regularly taking an omega-3 fatty acid supplement such as fish oil, it may be possible to offset high levels of omega-6 and decrease the amount of inflammation in your body. Combined with reducing the processed foods listed above this is a good way of reducing inflammation.

Other food sources of omega 3 include oily fish, walnuts and flaxseeds. Aim to consume around 3 - 5g of omega 3 per day; this can be from a combination of foods and supplements.

Intermittent fasting

When eating normally (not fasting), your body is exposed to calories throughout the day and responds by up-regulating processes associated with growth, which may also result in inflammation. When you fast, a process called autophagy which causes the body to use a significant portion of the up-regulating processes to aid in cellular repair and recycling of damaged cellular components, kicks in. Hence a fasting period allows the body to spend time to reduce inflammation, rather than working on digestion and growth.

A fasting day would ideally consist of consuming approximately 25% of your normal calories. To combat inflammation, try alternate day fasting ie one day where you eat as you normally followed by the next day where you fast.

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Ketogenic Diet to Reduce Body Fat

The ketogenic diet can accelerate body fat loss which in turn reduces inflammation.

The ketogenic diet consists of consuming a large amount of your calories from healthy fats. Additionally, this is combined with a low to moderate amount of protein and a very low amount of carbohydrates to decrease insulin and boost ketone levels.

The typical macro ratio is 75% fat, 20% protein and 5% carbs. See an overview of the food groups in a keto diet:

Interestingly, a few studies have indicated that consuming refined carbohydrates in large amounts (especially combined with excess total calories) is strongly associated with increased inflammation. Another explanation behind the ketogenic diet and its benefits for inflammation is that increasing ketones in the blood may actually be associated with a reduced inflammatory response. In essence, you are reducing pro-inflammatory foods while increasing intake of foods that help prevent inflammation.

Exercise

Exercise is also beneficial and multiple studies have revealed that exercise, whether aerobic/cardio or resistance/weight training, may help improve inflammatory response. There is also some evidence suggests that combining the two, (weight training and cardio), might be the best way to prevent inflammation.

Interestingly, exercise such as resistance training actually increases substances called cytokines in the body which increase inflammation. While that may sound like the opposite of what you want, it's actually something you need. Small and localized inflammation brought on by exercise is a normal healthy response to the stress of exercising. Exercise is actually seen by the body as a stressor or a threat, which in turn requires the body to respond and adapt. In response to the low amount of inflammation that occurs as a result of exercise, many different processes become up-regulated to help repair and increase the body's resilience to inflammation in the future.

So, by exercising you'll strengthen your immune system which will help to reduce and prevent future inflammation.