

Diet, Lifestyle, and Inflammation

Scientists are still learning about the role that inflammation plays in chronic disease development and prevention. There is not yet a consensus statement, or set of evidence-based guidelines, about standardized recommendations to reduce inflammation through diet and lifestyle.

How might diet and lifestyle play a role in reducing inflammation?

Nutrition may best play a role in reducing inflammation by using a total diet and lifestyle approach:

1. Eating a diet that promotes a healthy body weight, i.e. reducing calories if you are overweight or obese. Research has connected excess body fat (overweight and obesity) with increased inflammation. Adipose (fat) tissue secretes a variety of molecules that affect metabolism and contribute to low-grade systemic inflammation¹.
2. Regular exercise had also been associated with reduced systemic inflammation².

What are some of specific foods that may play a role?

There is evidence that a diet that contains **foods** rich in antioxidant vitamins (such as fruits and vegetables) and omega-3 fatty acids (such as fatty fish) is associated with reduced inflammation³.

If there were a way to eat to prevent/minimize inflammation, what would an ideal day of eating look like?

A diet to promote reduced inflammation would resemble the current American Heart Association (AHA) Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations⁴:

1. Balance caloric intake and physical activity to maintain a healthy body weight
2. Consume a diet rich in vegetables and fruits
3. Choose whole grain, high fiber foods
4. Consume fish, especially oily fish, at least twice a week
5. Limit saturated fat to <7% of energy, trans fat to <1% of energy, cholesterol to <300mg daily
6. Minimize intake of beverages and foods with added sugars.
7. Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt
8. If you consume alcohol, do so in moderation
9. When you eat food prepared outside of the home, follow AHA diet and lifestyle recommendations

This resource provides brief, general information about this health care topic. It does not take the place of the instructions you receive from your health care providers. Discuss the risks and benefits of therapies with your doctor and always take medication as prescribed. For answers to other questions talk to your health care provider.



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References

1. JAMA. 2002 Oct 23-30;288(16):2008-14.
2. Arch Intern Med. 2002 Jun 10;162(11):1286-92.
3. JAMA. 2002 Nov 27;288(20):2569-78.
4. Circulation. 2006 Jun 19;114:82-96.