

Health Notes

Food For Thought

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Last month I wrote about R.I.C.E. (rest, ice, compression, and elevation) for the treatment of inflamed extremities. While chiropractors treat injuries to extremities, the majority of patients have inflammatory processes occurring in their spine and other areas of the musculoskeletal system that is not easily treated with R.I.C.E. For these conditions, ice is extremely effective, but other measures are necessary for treating traumatic and chronic inflammatory conditions. It is important to alleviate inflammation not only for the musculoskeletal pain it produces, but because evidence shows inflammation increases the incidence of cardiovascular disease and arthritis.

For centuries, many cultures of the world have utilized "natural medicines" to fight sickness and increase longevity. I remember commercials 20 years ago depicting 100-year-old people living in the remote mountains of Russia eating yogurt. We still can use food and herbs like "natural medicines" as long as we are conscious about our choices of fats and oils.

For a diet to be anti-inflammatory, it must be high in Omega-3 fatty acids {inflammation fighters} and low in Omega-6 oils {inflammation promoters}.


All grains are known to be generally inflammatory. Grains react this way because they contain lectins, gliadin, and phytates, which promote an excessive Omega-6 fatty acid to Omega-3 ratio. The main benefit we get from whole grains is fiber and blood sugar regulation. It is best to get these benefits from fruits, vegetables and nuts.

Omega-6 oils are in the partially hydrogenated oils found in the form of margarines, shortening, commercially-prepared cookies and other baked goods and crackers.

Omega-3 fatty acids are the good ones. They become the Omega-3 oils contained in the deep cold-water fish. They are present in fish that eat the green vegetation that grows in water. It is an interesting scientific fact that farm-raised fish fed a "grain" diet do not produce enough of the desired Omega-3 oils; it is important to find out what the farm-raised fish are fed if you want the benefit of Omega-3 oils from your fish dinner.

You may see in some literature the Omega-3 fatty acids referred to as n-3 fatty acids, namely EPA and DHA. As mentioned, fish contain healthy oils because they eat green plants. You can also obtain the healthy n-3 fatty acids by eating other creatures beside fish that consume green vegetation, such as wild game, pasture- or grass-fed animals as well as the eggs of chickens fed a green vegetarian diet. Unrefined flax and walnut oils as well as foods containing them, are other sources of the Omega-3 fatty acids.

Other foods with anti-inflammatory effects are ginger, turmeric, garlic, dark chocolate, and purple/red grape juice or wine. A great snack is almonds and raisins mixed with a little dark chocolate. Together they taste like a candy bar and are highly anti-inflammatory. The popular Mediterranean diet follows an anti-inflammatory program very closely. This is a traditional diet that focuses on fruits, vegetables, and healthy animal products.

A healthy nutritional approach to treat inflammation can be very effective. Supplementation with a good multivitamin, minerals Omega-3 oils, co-enzyme Q-10, and herbs such as ginger, turmeric, and garlic will fight inflammation and help reduce all types of aches and pains. 

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