

## Inflammation

### Background Information for Facilitators

[Today's Dietitian, January 2018 issue - Inflammation](#)

[Tufts Nutrition Letter, "Do anti-inflammatory diets work?" January 2018](#)

[American Heart Association, "Inflammation and heart disease."](#)

### Behavior Goals

Participants will:

1. Understand the difference between acute and chronic inflammation.
2. Identify foods and food patterns that have potential to reduce chronic inflammation.
3. Choose one action step to reduce chronic inflammation.

### Meeting Preparation

1. Review the newsletter and guide and contact your coordinator if you need any assistance.
2. Read background resources if you are not familiar with this month's topic.
3. Determine which food tasting experience is most appropriate for your group.
4. Review handout provided at the end of this guide. Print individual copies or create a poster with the same information for a group activity.

### Props

- Inflammation handout or poster
- Pieces of bubble wrap and smooth plastic wrap

! The suggested wording for the presentation is in regular font and the **facilitator directions are in bold, dark red italic**. It's best not to read the presentation, but to use your own words, staying close to the meaning.

## MEETING

### Introduction

Optional sharing: Skip if time is limited to 30 minutes. *Invite participants to share a few New Year's resolutions for better health in 2019, or describe something they did to stay healthy during 2018. Use a New Year's party prop, like a blower, to celebrate each commitment or step to good health.*

This month, our conversation is about inflammation; a topic you may have heard about but not really understand. *Check in—is this an accurate assumption? Maybe they heard about it on the Doctor Oz Show!* I hope you will leave our meeting feeling better informed and ready to take action.

Optional activity: *Write the word “inflammation” at the top of the a large piece of paper or poster board. Draw a long horizontal line below it. At the beginning of the line write, “I know very little about inflammation; it doesn't influence my food choices.” At the end of the line write, “I understand enough about inflammation to choose foods that reduce chronic inflammation.” Pass out colored stickers and ask people to place one on a spot along the line that best represents their understanding of inflammation. At the end of the meeting, pass out a different colored sticker and repeat the activity.*

### Nutrition Discussion

*Briefly summarize key points from the first page to help your group understand the difference between acute and chronic inflammation. Tip: Write key points on notecards, so you aren't tempted to read the newsletter.*

Researchers are finding more evidence that chronic inflammation is linked to serious diseases such as the ones listed at the bottom of page one in your newsletter. *Cancer, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and non-Alzheimer's vascular dementias.* Today, I'll use the example of heart disease to help you better understand how persistent inflammation may harm you.

Atherosclerosis. Do you know what it is? *It's a common condition among people as they age. Arteries become narrowed and hardened due to a buildup of plaque around the inner artery wall.*

You may already take medication to help your arteries stay healthy *medications to lower blood pressure, cholesterol (especially LDL), triglycerides, and other markers of atherosclerosis.*

***Hold up a roll of plastic wrap to demonstrate that arteries have smooth linings when we're young. Arteries are designed to expand and contract easily as blood moves through them.***

***Hold up a piece of bubble wrap to show how the lining of arteries can become bumpy over time if plaque develops in the artery wall.***

We know smoking, being overweight and eating too much saturated fat and cholesterol contribute to the formation of plaque in our arteries. But we haven't fully understood how inflammation impacts this process. It makes it worse!

Health experts now know that our bodies respond to plaque as abnormal or foreign material. The presence of plaque and the material inside of plaque set off a series of inflammatory responses. For example, inflammation can cause a clot to form, block the flow of blood to the heart muscle and trigger a heart attack.

***An artery to the heart that's blocked causes a heart attack. A blocked artery in or leading to the brain causes a stroke.***

**So what are you supposed to do about inflammation?**

Page two offers one suggestion: choose foods that have potential to reduce inflammation in the body. They're really the same foods that you already know are good for you. ***Emphasize the message of eating plant-based foods rich in antioxidants. Review paragraphs about foods to eat and foods to avoid on page 2.***

Want another idea? Page 3 has an article about lifestyle factors such as smoking and stress that contribute to chronic inflammation.

***Use the handout or poster to identify specific actions or ways to reduce chronic inflammation. Depending on the number of people at the meeting, share out ideas (at tables or as one group). Encourage people to write down at least two ideas. If not annoying, pop a bubble on the bubble wrap each time someone shares a unique idea.***

## Tasting Activity

**Option one:** Basic stewed white beans (Taste or adapt recipe on page 4.)

### Teaching points:

- Make half of the recipe for one or two people.
- If you can't find cannellini beans, buy great northern beans.  
[https://www.cooksillustrated.com/how\\_tos/5446-cannellini-bean-substitute](https://www.cooksillustrated.com/how_tos/5446-cannellini-bean-substitute)
- Recipe is great way to use up wilted carrots.
- Want it thinner? Add water or broth.
- Don't have tomato paste on hand? What about ketchup?
- Add leftovers like pieces of ham or chicken. Top with grated parmesan for more flavor.
- Leftover spinach will add color, taste and more nutrition. Toss in a handful of fresh leaves just before eating. Have an old zucchini in your produce drawer? Add thin shavings of zucchini to the dish and cook for just a few minutes.

### Option two: Oven-roasted winter vegetables

Choose your favorite method to roast veggies. Use colorful winter vegetables, such as Brussels sprouts, turnips, sweet potatoes, carrots, winter squash, red onions, etc. Roast prior to meeting and warm prior to tasting.

Examples:

[Roasted root vegetables - Eating Well](#)

[Roasted winter vegetables - Food Network](#)

## SNAP: A Vital Nutrition and Health Program for Seniors (page 4)

When you're done with the puzzle, make sure you read the short article about SNAP, which is called Food Assistance in Iowa. If you know of a friend, neighbor or someone in your family who struggles to pay for medications, give them the number for the Food Assistance Hotline. Professional staff can help them find out if they qualify for Food Assistance. They don't have to visit an office or make an appointment...just make a phone call!

## Physical Activity

Being active helps us move toward or maintain a healthy weight. It also helps get rid of deep belly fat that settles into our internal organs. So let's celebrate our ability to move more by \_\_\_\_\_.

***Engage your group in a fun physical activity for at least 3 minutes. One idea: Play a song, such as "Twist and Shout." Invite them to dance with you or lead simple chair movements to the rhythm of music.***

# Anti-Inflammation Ideas

**Less stress**

**Better sleep**

**Move more**

**Better pain relief**

**More antioxidant-  
rich foods**

**Cut back on smoking**

**Cut back on alcohol**





# FRESH CONVERSATIONS

What is the conversation about?

## January Conversations

- Inflammation: What's the buzz about?
- Fight harmful inflammation with food
- Try a winter white bean soup

### INFLAMMATION



### When?

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### Where?

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### Contact:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Iowa Nutrition Network  
Iowa Department of Public Health  
(515) 281-6047

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