



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S

FRESH CONVERSATIONS

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A Healthy Living Newsletter for Seniors

INFLAMMATION

Inflammation is the new buzzword, and all sorts of anti-inflammatory diets and health products are being pitched to the public. It's become a multi-billion dollar industry.

What's inflammation?

You likely experience **acute or short-lived inflammation** frequently, including each time you cut a finger, stub a toe or develop a sore throat.

You see and feel signs of acute inflammation in your body; tissues become red, swollen and painful. It's part of the body's natural healing response to injury, toxins and infection.



Did You Know?

Antioxidants are powerful anti-inflammatory nutrients, along with magnesium and fiber.

Chronic inflammation could lead to other serious chronic diseases.

Chronic inflammation is harder to understand. It occurs on the inside of tissues and may be invisible. It's become a concern because research has linked persistent, low-level inflammation to development of serious chronic diseases—including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and non-Alzheimer's vascular dementias.

In short, acute inflammation is a protective natural response, but when it goes on too long, it can trigger disease processes. Your body is on high alert all the time.

Are you burning to know more?
Look inside for tips on how to reduce inflammation.



Anti-Inflammatory Diets: Do They Help?



Current evidence shows potential, not promises, from foods commonly labeled “anti-inflammatory.” More human studies are needed.

One dietitian described the situation like this: “There’s a lot of dietary trash talking in the wellness community...” especially when it comes to foods that are considered “inflammatory.”

Popular anti-inflammatory elimination diets often restrict entire categories of food—including beans and legumes, grains, dairy, eggs, nuts, seeds and “nightshade” vegetables (tomatoes, peppers, potatoes and eggplants). But the science does not back up these extreme approaches.


Dietitians and nutrition researchers recommend diets rich in whole plant-based foods—that naturally contain antioxidants and other anti-inflammatory properties similar to the Mediterranean diet.

What specific foods should you eat? Anti-inflammatory foods are the ones you’re already advised to eat for optimal health: whole grains, beans, nuts, colorful fruits and vegetables, plant oils and cold-water fish like albacore tuna, salmon and mackerel—rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Plant compounds found in tea, onions and spices such as turmeric and ginger also have antioxidant or anti-inflammatory effects.

What foods should you avoid? Studies suggest that excessive amounts of red and processed meats, refined grains and sugar-sweetened beverages may act through a variety of mechanisms to increase inflammation. Saturated fat and trans fat may also trigger inflammation so don’t indulge in stick margarine and fried foods such as French fries.

Newsletter sources:
<https://foodandhealth.com/anti-inflammatory-eating-pattern/>
<https://www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/0118p12.shtml>
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/foods-that-fight-inflammation>
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/248423.php>
<https://health.usnews.com/health-news/blogs/eat-run/articles/2018-10-11/your-anti-inflammatory-diet-is-probably-just-the-opposite>
https://www.ncoa.org/blog/how-snap-ensures-healthy-aging/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=09282018_AWU





What Else Can You Do? Several lifestyle factors contribute to chronic inflammation: smoking, stress, drinking alcohol excessively and obesity—of course! Excess body fat, especially deep belly fat, is strongly linked with inflammation. And researchers are learning more about how obesity triggers a cascade of inflammation that leads to conditions such as insulin resistance.


But here's the good news if you're overweight. Just a 5 to 10 percent reduction in weight can reduce inflammation. And you might not have to wait until you lose weight to reap the benefits. Anti-inflammatory effects may start when "calories in" (from food) and "calories out" (from activity) are in balance. Each day of healthful habits can produce benefits.

So, start today!



Eating foods with anti-inflammatory potential will be most effective when you're also at a healthy weight.

To fight chronic inflammation, eat a variety of foods enriched with anti-inflammatory phytochemicals.



Testimonial

Beverly Franks attends *Fresh Conversations* at SANSI in Springville.

Although **Beverly Franks** no longer lives in Springville, she drives there every month to be with friends and participate in *Fresh Conversations*. For several years, the program has helped her "make better food choices and lead a healthier life."

Because she sampled new foods at *Fresh Conversations* meetings, she now eats foods previously never on her radar. She also developed greater confidence in her ability to use food labels and makes better choices at the grocery store. "I am more diligent in reading food labels because of what I have learned at *Fresh Conversations*."

Beverly enjoys being active and uses exercises from the newsletters. (She saves them all.) "I do the exercises because I need to keep up my strength, so I can keep doing all of the activities that I enjoy." And she doesn't let weather get in her way. When she can't get out and walk, she stands in front of her sink and exercises!

Fresh Conversations is just a newsletter without people like Beverly. **Thank you, Beverly, for your contributions and positive example!**

Decoding Inflammation Answers
1. Colorful 2. Fat 3. Herbs
4. Grains 5. Coffee 6. Weight



Basic Stewed White Beans

A Hearty Winter Treat

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Sauté some vegetables and herbs, add canned beans, season, and you're in business. This recipe makes four 1-cup servings.



Ingredients

- 2 large carrots, finely chopped
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 3 Tbs olive oil
- 2 Tbs tomato paste
- 1 tsp dried oregano or thyme
- 2 cans no-salt-added cannellini beans
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground black pepper

Directions

1. Sauté carrot and onion in the oil until lightly browned, 4-5 minutes.
2. Stir in the tomato paste. Cook, stirring often, until the paste starts to darken, 2-3 minutes.
3. Stir in the oregano or thyme. Cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.
4. Stir in the beans and their liquid. Cook until heated through, 1-2 minutes. Season with the salt and pepper.

Nutrition

Per serving (1 cup): Calories 290, Total Fat 12g, Saturated Fat 1.5g, Carbs 37g, Fiber 10g, Total Sugar 6g, Added Sugar 0g, Protein 11g, Sodium 340mg

Adapted from The Healthy Cook - The Bean Variations (NutritionAction.com, 2018).

Take Action Corner

This month I will...

Decoding Inflammation

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
12	5	19	10	3	21	17	23	14	24	2	26	15

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
22	7	25	9	1	18	11	6	13	20	4	16	8

1. $\frac{19}{7} \frac{26}{7} \frac{1}{21} \frac{6}{26}$
fruits and vegetables

2. Healthy $\frac{21}{12} \frac{11}{11}$ sources

3. $\frac{23}{3} \frac{1}{5} \frac{18}{18}$ and spices

4. Whole $\frac{17}{1} \frac{12}{14} \frac{22}{18}$

5. Tea and $\frac{19}{7} \frac{21}{21} \frac{3}{3}$

6. Healthy $\frac{20}{3} \frac{14}{17} \frac{23}{11}$

SNAP: A Vital Nutrition and Health Program for Seniors

The Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) helps older adults with low income free up financial resources to stay healthy. Seniors enrolled in SNAP are less likely than non-SNAP participants to skip doses of medication or skip refilling medications. They're also less likely to be hospitalized, and those who are, have shorter, less expensive hospital stays.

In Iowa, SNAP is called Food Assistance. To find out if you or a loved one is eligible, call the Food Assistance Hotline: 1-855-944-FOOD (3663).



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