
INFLAMMATORY FOODS LIST

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** This is a general list of foods that may cause inflammation within your body. Persistent body-wide inflammation can worsen many other health conditions and this can be effectively managed through diet changes. You should discuss your particular health situation and diet with your treating provider and work closely with a registered dietitian or other healthcare provider that has had additional nutrition training.*

SUGAR

- Processed, refined, or added sugar: white, brown, powdered, corn syrup.
- Raw cane sugar is somewhat less refined but should still be limited.
- Artificial processed sweeteners (Splenda, Aspartame, Stevia).
- This does not include sugars occurring naturally in foods that are eaten in their original form (like in fruits, vegetables, leaves like stevia or mint).
- Fruit juices are primarily sugar without the beneficial fiber from the fruit so these should also be kept to a minimum.
- Even “natural” sweeteners (like honey, maple syrup, agave, monk fruit, powdered stevia) should be limited; these may not be as harmful as artificial or refined sugars, keep in mind the level of processing involved. How far is the product from its original form, are there preservatives or chemical additives, has it been ground into a powdered form, etc.
- For most people, sugar in small amounts is not overly problematic. However, if you are dealing with a chronic inflammatory condition, you may do well to cut it out altogether.
- Maximum daily intake of added sugars for women is suggested to be 6 teaspoons (24 grams) or less and for men is 9 teaspoons (36 grams) or less.

VEGETABLE & SEED OILS

- Corn, canola, vegetable, peanut, grapeseed, safflower, sunflower, and soy.
- Also mayonnaise and most salad dressings.
- These are high in omega-6 fatty acids that are known to cause inflammation.
- While omega-6 fatty acids are essential for your body, they need to be balanced out with omega-3 fatty acids and most diets have an excess of omega-6 with not enough omega-3.
- Too much omega-6 contributes to inflammation, high cholesterol, hormone imbalance, and obesity.

- What you can do:
 - > buy cold-pressed oils
 - > eat in moderation
 - > don't heat to high temperatures (keep below smoke point)
 - > balance out your diet with omega-3 fatty acids
 - > buy smaller quantities, store away from air, check for rancidity

PROCESSED MEATS

- Includes meat that has been smoked, cured, salted, dried or canned in order to enhance its flavor or extend its shelf life.
- Most common examples: cold cuts, deli meat, bacon, salami, sausage, beef jerky.
- Research is strong showing that these contribute to inflammation in the body and should be only eaten in moderation.
- You may need to eliminate completely if dealing with an inflammatory condition.

ARTIFICIAL PRESERVATIVES

- These are found in processed foods and come in many different names.
- The best is to limit consumption of processed foods and anything that has a long ingredient list with multiple chemical-looking names.

TRANS FATS

- Trans fats are found in many foods, which means they are typically consumed in very high quantities in most people's diets.
- They are easy to use, inexpensive, last a long time, and can be reused many times in commercial fryers before needing to be changed.
- Trans fats raise LDL cholesterol and lower the more protective HDL cholesterol, which increases risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.
- They have no nutritional benefits and contribute to inflammation.
- Found in most processed foods, snack foods, fried foods, doughnuts, baked goods, cakes, pie crusts, biscuits, frozen pizza, cookies, crackers, stick margarines and some other "butter-type" spreads.
- They can be found on a food label by looking for "trans fats" or "partially hydrogenated oils" in the ingredient list. Even if the trans fat level says "0", if the ingredient list says partially hydrogenated oils then there are still trace amounts in the product, just at a level below what is required for labelling.

SATURATED FATS

- There is some debate about saturated fats and health; they may not be as harmful as initially portrayed and it is important to distinguish between processed and unprocessed meat.
- Saturated fats are found in red meat, full-fat dairy, cheese, butter, coconut oil and animal fats. They are solid and room temperature (cooled bacon grease).
- Some examples are: beef, veal, lamb, pork, venison, rabbit, boar, bison, elk.
- There are some things you can do to minimize inflammation with these meats:
 - > avoid cooking at high temperatures
 - > stew, steam, or cook low and slow
 - > avoid charring or smoking
 - > marinate meat in lemon juice, garlic, or red wine first
 - > choose grass-fed or wild red meat over factory-farmed
- Red meat eaten a few times per week can provide many beneficial nutrients: protein, zinc, iron, vitamin B12, selenium. But this should still be consumed in moderation and it is possible to get these nutrients from other sources.

REFINED CARBOHYDRATES

- This includes white flour products (breads, rolls, crackers, pastries), instant mashed potatoes, white pasta, white rice, many cereals.
- These foods in excess increase inflammation.
- These are not all bad; after all, many countries eat large amounts of white rice or white pasta and still tend to have lower instances of heart disease, diabetes, and chronic inflammatory conditions. This is likely because of cultural traditions in these countries of combining it with other nutrient-dense foods, less sugar & processed foods, as well as a more active lifestyle in general.
- The takeaway here should be moderation, and balancing these foods with lots of fruits and vegetables, healthy protein and fats, and staying active.

PRE-ROASTED NUTS

- The high heat of roasting degrades the healthy fats, causing them to go rancid more quickly; sitting on the store shelf also increases rancidity.
- Roasted, chopped, and ground nuts will go rancid more quickly than raw ones; so will nuts that are exposed to the air.
- Rancid oils promote inflammation and are carcinogenic.
- To reduce this, buy nuts that are stored in cans (protected from light and air), smell them to be sure they aren't rancid, and consider storing them in the refrigerator.

- If you eat a lot of nuts you can consider buying raw nuts and roasting them on your own in small batches in your oven.
- In moderation this is not likely to be a problem, but high quantities of commercially pre-roasted nuts can significantly contribute to inflammation.

FOODS LABELLED “LOW-FAT” or “FAT-FREE”

- These foods typically are highly processed and have added sugars to improve taste so they are packed with empty calories.
- Your body, especially your brain, needs healthy fats to function.
- If you are choosing between fat and sugar, fat is the better choice.

SYNTHETIC PESTICIDES & HERBICIDES

- Go by many names but the biggest one is “glyphosate”, the main ingredient found in RoundUp.
- These products have shown to be highly inflammatory and possibly carcinogenic.
- These are difficult to avoid, but something to consider if you are dealing with a chronic inflammatory condition and need to lower your inflammatory load.
- You may need to look for “pesticide-free”, grow your own, or purchase from a farmer that you know.
- Organic is a good option, but just know that this doesn’t always mean pesticide-free.

ALCOHOL

- While it is clear that excess alcohol consumption is generally unhealthy, harms the gut microbiome, and contributes to inflammation, experts often disagree on terms like “moderate” and “excess”.
- Most commonly it is defined as one drink per day (or 7 per week) for women or two per day (or 14 per week for men). While things like body size come into play a little, hormonal differences with gender are a bigger player here.
- Portions also matter. One standard drink equals:
 - > 12 ounces (355 mL) of “regular” beer (approximately 5% alcohol)
 - > 9 ounces (266 mL) of malt liquor
 - > 5 ounces (148 mL) of unfortified wine
 - > 1.5 ounces (44 mL) of 80-proof hard liquor
- Also consider type: the least inflammatory options are hard cider, tequila, brandy, cognac, rum, and red wine. Red wine contains polyphenols that have anti-inflammatory properties that may minimize the inflammatory effects.
- Generally, most people are fine to treat alcohol like sugar: use in moderation.

- If you are currently dealing with an inflammatory condition, you may do well to cut it out all together. Even if for a brief time to heal and then attempt to add in. Like anything, watch what your response is.

GLUTEN

- I mention this as a myth-buster because it is a popular topic.
- There is no clear evidence that gluten in and of itself is detrimental or inflammatory to humans in general; humans have been eating grains and gluten for 10,000 years.
- Some people with certain genetic conditions or in the absence of a healthy gut microbiome may show sensitivity to gluten and develop inflammation.
- Some of this may be related to the way it is currently processed, the quantity consumed, and the health of the gut.
- The gut microbiome plays a role in breaking down gluten. An imbalance in the microbiome may contribute to sensitivity.
- It is possible that brief elimination, healing the gut, and then establishing a healthy gut microbiome will allow for reintroduction of these foods without symptoms or an inflammatory response.
- This should be done with a trained dietitian or physician.