

Inflammation: A Common Denominator of Disease by Raymond Francis

Inflammation is one of the common denominators of disease. Every chronic disease is an inflammatory disease. No matter what so-called disease you have, from cancer to the common cold, inflammation is a major part of your problem.

Learning how to prevent and reverse inflammation will go a long way toward preventing and reversing almost any disease, as well as slowing the aging process, keeping us healthy, biologically young and vigorous for a lifetime.

Unfortunately, most Americans suffer from chronic inflammation, caused by a variety of factors that seriously undermine health and ages us prematurely. Resulting from an "inflammatory cascade," common inflammatory diseases include allergies, Alzheimer's, asthma, arthritis, autoimmune diseases, bursitis, cancer, cervicitis, colitis, cystitis, diabetes, gastritis, heart disease, hepatitis, infections, myocarditis, nephritis, neuritis, osteoporosis, prostatitis, sinusitis, tendonitis, vaginitis and aging. Even our children are increasingly suffering from "diseases of aging" in epidemic numbers. To put an end to this tragedy, we must learn how to prevent and reverse chronic inflammation.

What is inflammation? It is the body's response to injury, irritation or infection, a natural and healthy process. If you cut your finger, the body immediately begins an inflammatory process that neutralizes harmful microorganisms, helps to repair the wound, and cleans up the debris resulting from the injury.

Inflammation is beneficial when needed, but it is disastrous when chronic. Chronic inflammation generates a constant supply of free radicals that overwhelm our antioxidant defenses and damage DNA, aging us and causing disease of every description.

What causes inflammation? Most importantly, the standard American diet causes inflammation. Most of us suffer from chronic inflammation and disease because the American diet is pro-inflammatory. It is rich in pro-inflammatory compounds, while lacking antioxidants and other nutrients that help to prevent and control inflammation.

How does our diet cause inflammation? One way is our excessive consumption of refined carbohydrates. Sugar and white flour are deadly poisons that have an inflammatory effect on the body. Unaware of this, the average American consumes more than 160 pounds of sugar and 200 pounds of white flour per year. Sugar and white flour increase blood sugar, and even a modest increase in blood sugar generates pro-inflammatory chemicals. Most people eat these poisons daily in the form of bread, pasta, breakfast cereal, cookies, cakes, soft drinks, candy, etc.

In addition, sugar and white flour cause inflammation and disease by forming AGEs. AGEs are produced when a protein reacts with sugar, resulting in damaged, cross-linked proteins. As the body tries to protect you by breaking these AGEs apart, immune cells secrete large amounts of inflammatory chemicals. Many of the diseases that we think of as part of aging are actually caused by this process. Depending on where the AGEs occur, the result can be arthritis, heart disease, cataracts, memory loss, wrinkled skin or diabetes complications, to name a few.

Acidity is another problem. Most Americans eat an acidic diet caused by too much salt, sugar, white flour, dairy, meat and cola drinks. Many experts consider over-acidity to be one of the major causes of chronic inflammation, with increasing acidity causing increasing amounts of inflammation.

The fats and oils in the American diet are inflammatory because they contain excessive omega-6 fatty acids. Omega-6 fatty acids are pro-inflammatory, while omega-3s are anti-inflammatory. Historically, humans consumed roughly equal amounts of these oils, achieving a balance. Today, we consume 20 to 30 times as much omega-6 as omega-3. The modern processed-food industry fills our stores with pro-inflammatory oils, including corn, safflower, sunflower, soy, canola, and peanut oils. Grain-fed beef, poultry, and farmed fish also contain excessive omega-6. These imbalances create a huge excess of pro-inflammatory chemicals in our diet. It is extremely important that only healthy fish, meats, fats and oils be consumed (Beyond Health supplies healthy oils).

Milk products also cause inflammation. Modern dairy cows eat grain-containing diets producing excessive omega-6 fats, creating a pro-inflammatory imbalance. In addition, a substantial percentage of our population (some estimate 50%) is allergic to dairy, often unknowingly. Frequent consumption of dairy causes chronic allergic reactions, creating chronic inflammation.

Hydrogenated oils are also pro-inflammatory. These oils find their way into a myriad of products including candy, baked goods, margarine, breakfast cereal, and peanut butter. The trans fatty acids contained in hydrogenated oils inhibit the activity of enzymes that make anti-inflammatory compounds, but not those that create pro-inflammatory ones; chronic inflammation is the result.

In addition to diet, infections also contribute to inflammation. It is important to keep your immunity strong and to minimize the number of infections you suffer. Infections trigger powerful inflammatory processes to destroy invading microorganisms. Unfortunately, the inflammation damages you, as well as the invaders. Having one cold after another will do lasting damage, and shorten your life. Repeated infections, as well as chronic infections, lead to chronic inflammation that damages and ages the entire body.

Physical injuries also create inflammation. Nature intended inflammation to subside once an injury is repaired. However, because of our pro-inflammatory diet, injuries are seldom fully healed and often result in chronic low-grade inflammation in the injured tissue. This is why athletes have problems with old injuries as they age. Incompletely healed tissues produce inflammatory chemicals that promote inflammation for the entire body.

Allergies and food sensitivities also create inflammatory responses. Chronic allergic reactions create chronic inflammation. This is why allergic reactions must be minimized by strengthening the immune system and avoiding allergens. Unfortunately, allergies have become epidemic.

Contributing to this epidemic has been the irrational misuse of antibiotics, NSAIDS(non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), and hormones by our obsolete physicians. These dangerous drugs disrupt gut tissue, causing leakage of undigested food molecules into the blood, thereby promoting food allergies.

A good idea for almost anyone is to stay away from the most common allergens such as dairy and wheat (half the population may be allergic to the casein found in milk and the gluten found in wheat, rye, and barley). Anyone suffering from celiac disease knows how inflammatory gluten can be.

Yet another promoter of chronic, systemic inflammation is fat cells. More than two-out-of-three Americans are overweight, and fat cells, especially those that form around the abdomen, produce large amounts of inflammatory chemicals. This is a huge source of inflammation, and is the reason why overweight people suffer so much more disease and disability.

Environmental toxins are also inflammatory. Synthetic fibers, latex, glues, adhesives, plastics, air fresheners, cleaning products and perfume are examples of everyday chemicals that can trigger an inflammatory response. Chronic exposure, at even low doses, can drive your immune system crazy, resulting in inflammatory autoimmune diseases.

Chronic stress produces hormones that result in chronic inflammation. Stress produces inflammatory chemicals that can make your skin break out or your intestines go into revolt. Likewise, insomnia causes inflammation. People who are sleep deprived have higher levels of inflammatory chemicals.

Inflammation is a common element in virtually all disease. By causing chronic inflammation we are aging ourselves prematurely, causing us to look old, feel tired, and suffer every imaginable disease.

Controlling chronic inflammation takes a combination approach because it arises from a combination of causes, but most of it is under your control. By learning how to prevent and reverse inflammation, you can achieve power over aging and disease. What a wonderful goal -- and so easy to do.

If you want to prevent disease, or if you want to get well, consume a diet high in a variety of fresh, organic vegetables, fruits, nuts, and seeds. Get rid of those excess pounds. Take high quality anti-inflammatory supplements. If you take these principles to heart, you will be well on your way to a longer, higher quality, disease-free life.

Supplement with antioxidant nutrients: omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins A, B complex (including folic acid, B6 and B12), C, D, and E, plus beta-carotene, CoQ10, curcumin, quercetin, selenium, N-acetylcysteine, and alpha-lipoic acid.