

# Using Food to Combat Inflammation

Reduce inflammation with everyday foods that include fatty acids and antioxidants.

Michael Schaaf

Sales & Juice Bar Trainer/Educator for Performance Food Centers



Inflammation is a natural response by the body to help protect against infection. There is an increase of blood flow to the damaged area to promote healing or generate pain to signal the brain that there is something wrong. Medications can be used to control acute pain and discomfort, although, through

diet and exercise, inflammation can be decreased naturally for the long haul!

Inflammation is linked to various medical conditions including:<sup>2</sup>

- Alzheimer's Disease
- Asthma
- Chronic Lung Diseases
- Type 2 Diabetes
- Heart Disease
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease
- Rheumatoid Arthritis

A major cause of inflammation in our bodies is the food we eat. Inflammation can be aggravated by diets high in refined sugars or high in processed or hydrogenated vegetable oils such as those present in margarines, potato chips and baked goods and by diets. But food can also be part of the solution to the problem of inflammation.

Anti-inflammatory foods, when incorporated into your daily diet, can reduce inflammation in the body and bring the problem under control. A good goal would be to incorporate some type of anti-inflammatory food into every meal that you eat, and eliminate pro-inflammatory foods from your diet as much as possible. People who have accomplished this often notice relief from previous discomforts along with a greater ability to control their weight. As a side note, exercise is also a great way to counter inflammation.

There are at least two dozen factors that affect a food's inflammatory potential, including the amounts and proportion of various fatty acids, the amount of antioxidants and other nutrients, and the food's effect on blood sugar levels (glycemic impact). Many foods have a combination of inflammation-producing and inflammation-reducing factors. An orange, for example, contains antioxidants that quell inflammation. But it also contains natural sugars that can have a mild inflammatory effect. Similarly, a piece of lean beef contains both inflammatory saturated fats as well as a surprising amount of anti-inflammatory monounsaturated fats. Mainstream views about "anti-inflammatory" foods is often based on just one or two nutrients, such as omega-3 fats or antioxidants and fails to consider the whole picture.

The IF Rating system was developed to paint a more complete picture of anti-inflammatory foods. With the IF Ratings, you can see whether a food is inflammatory or anti-inflammatory. To figure the inflammatory potential of entire meals or recipes, you simply total up the IF Ratings of the individual foods.<sup>1</sup>

Below is a list of foods with the some of the highest IF-Ratings:

Peppers	Garlic
Ginger Root	Fish Oil (Salmon)
Parsley	Onions
Kale	Turmeric
Apple Cider	Spinach

## References

<sup>1</sup> *The Conscious Life. Find Anti-Inflammatory Foods with Inflammation Factor Ratings.* (Last Accessed 6/18/13). Available at: [www.theconsciouslife.com/anti-inflammatory-foods-inflammation-factor-ratings.htm](http://www.theconsciouslife.com/anti-inflammatory-foods-inflammation-factor-ratings.htm)

<sup>2</sup> *Therapeutic Research Faculty. Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database.* (Last Accessed 6/19/13). Available at: [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/993.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/993.html)

Michael Schaaf is a Sales Associate and Juice Bar Trainer/Educator at Performance Food Centers. He has a Bachelor's Degree in Kinesiology from Penn State University as well as a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Argosy University. Michael has over 5 years of personal training experience working with injury rehabilitation, athletes, and the elderly. He is in the process of obtaining the International Fitness Professional Association's Sports Nutrition Certification and the National Strength and Conditioning Association's Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist Certification. When not working at PFC, he participates in adult softball and baseball leagues. He believes you can work smarter and not harder in order to reach your fitness goals!