



Alan Inglis, M.D.

HEALTH REVELATIONS

from America's Country Doctor

Disarming the deadly effects of inflammation—without risking your health on a single drug

You don't just wake up one morning with diabetes or cancer, the way you do with a cold.

The scary truth is that both of these deadly diseases start to work their way through your body well before you even know you're sick—sometimes as early as childhood. And much like the proverbial tortoise, they always run their course slowly, silently, and steadily—with inflammation as the key source of their stamina.

In fact, name just about any disease, and you can bet that inflammation is a part of the picture. Heart disease, arthritis, Alzheimer's, asthma, or osteoporosis—all of these conditions can be traced back to inflammation.

The pill pushers behind Big Pharma know this well—their entire business is built on it. But you'll probably want to skip on anything they try to sell you. If we learned one thing from the Vioxx scandal, it's that prescription anti-inflammatories kill—and a whole lot faster than the diseases I just mentioned, too.

What you really need to foil the

effects of inflammation is a brilliant strategy—and that takes knowing your opponent inside and out.

Staking out the source of chronic inflammation

Your immune system is a complex array of cells that work as a team to protect your body from invaders—viruses, bacteria, allergens, and toxins, to name a few. Inflammation is what happens when this system springs into action.

At the visible level, inflammation takes the form of swelling, redness, heat, and pain. And while it's never a walk in the park, this reaction is your body's necessary protection against acute disease and injury—at least, in the short-term. The long-term inflammation that results from a chronically cranked up immune system, on the other hand, is a whole different ballgame.

In the face of constant insult and stress, your immune system will become confused and start harming the very tissues and organs it was designed to protect. And it goes without saying that this type of inflammation (also known as “mal-adaptive”) can be deadly—not least of all because it often goes com-

pletely unnoticed until some serious damage has already been done.

Fortunately, this type of inflammation doesn't ravage your body without leaving a few clues behind. And knowing your levels of C-reactive protein (CRP) can give you a fair warning as to what kind of trouble it could be causing behind the scenes.

Your body makes CRP in response to many different kinds of inflammation—and elevated CRPs are associated with increased risk of a variety of serious conditions including heart disease, diabetes, and dementia.

The good news is that there's an excellent blood test called the highly sensitive C-Reactive protein test (hcCRP). Ideally, your level should be less than 1.0. Levels between 1.0 and 3.0 are termed borderline (a vague term meaning roughly less than ideal but probably not yet a major problem). But anything above this range can mean trouble, and should always be followed by a recheck in one to three months.

In most cases, I've found that elevated CRP levels accompany one or both of two common conditions.

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On the one hand, the patient might have a cold or allergies. As it turns out, any acute illness will raise the profile of this protein in your blood—but it will also gradually fall as the illness resolves. And because these cases are temporary, they generally aren't cause for alarm.

But the second condition (and the one which you may have already guessed by now) poses a far greater cause for concern—and that's obesity.

See, fats cells don't just sit there in your body, waiting patiently to be converted to energy at some later, more convenient date. They have to keep themselves busy somehow—and do so by producing over thirty pro-inflammatory substances called adipokines. It's these substances that result in chronic inflammation, signaled by chronically elevated CRP levels—and like I said before, this is always a bad sign.

It's not so surprising, then, that

obesity increases your risk, not only of heart disease, but of a whole host of other degenerative conditions—the ones which, as I mentioned earlier, are always marked by inflammation, like diabetes, cancer, and dementia. And it's even less surprising when you consider another key fact: A lot of inflammation actually starts in your gut.

Eating yourself (and treating yourself) to death

Twenty tons of food in the course of a lifetime means your gut's immune system has its work cut out for it, processing all of that input and separating out the good from the bad. So if your immune system isn't up to snuff, unwanted molecules from your food can escape into your body where they trigger a generalized inflammatory response with a whole host of nasty side effects: fatigue, brain fog, chronic sniffles, mild depression, poor sleep, bloating, gas, and rashes, just to list off a few.

Some folks are only sensitive to certain types of foods, mainly due

to eating them too often, which can aggravate what is already a genetic predisposition. The most common triggers also happen to be some of the most common foods: dairy, soy, corn, and wheat. Eating any one of these foods on a daily basis can wreak havoc on your body in the form of one or all of the symptoms just mentioned if you're sensitive to them.

Unfortunately, most conventional doctors gloss over the devastating impact of food allergies or sensitivities—if not deny their existence altogether. I can only assume that they quickly forgot all of the biochemistry they learned in medical school, making room for all the drug science they'd need in order to write prescriptions once they made it out into practice. (Trust me, I've been there and done that.)

Of course, if these same doctors took the time to brush up on their basics, they'd realize that those prescriptions serve little purpose in this case but to strengthen the link between gut problems and inflammation. Antibiotics, pre-

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scription antacids—and ironically enough, even anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen and naproxen—are all commonly-used drugs that can disturb the healthy balance of good and bad bacteria in your gut.

The good bacteria help your immune system to do its job—and that includes helping to control inflammation. But if this bacteria is depleted over the course of many years (as is the case when any of the drugs above are used too often) it can seriously compromise good digestion, leading to chronic inflammation throughout all of your body's systems.

A recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, for example, found a strong connection between heavy antibiotic use and breast cancer—thought to be due in no small part to your body's decreased ability to absorb essential cancer-protective nutrients from the food that you eat.

And considering the chemical soup we live in today, it's pretty obvious that we need all the protection we can get.

The troubling truth about toxic overload

Food allergens only cause trouble for some folks—but toxins are toxic to everybody, to some degree. And while it's probably fair to say that most people won't have major medical problems due to toxic exposure, the truth is, we really don't know for sure.

Hundreds of new unregulated chemicals are introduced into the

environment every year, in addition to the hundreds of others that have already been around for decades—the use of which is and always has been poorly controlled, to say the least. Unfortunately, many chronic diseases start at an early age and take just as many decades to develop, so it's tough to conduct meaningful studies that could “prove” that this kind of pollution causes harm—though there's plenty of valid scientific evidence pointing at this fact.

An overworked liver combined with an excess of chemicals in your food, air (and, of course, your medication), can result in a condition called toxic overload. The symptoms include mental confusion, depression, fatigue, muscle weakness, and frequent colds—all of which can be mistaken for a whole host of different illnesses and diseases.

Even so, most doctors' offices still dismiss toxins as a crucial health issue—often out of sheer ignorance. In fact, they usually make the problem worse, doling out cocktails of toxic drugs to alleviate their sick patients' symptoms—all of this, when the real problem was toxic overload in the first place!

This kind of negligence is not only dangerous, but—in my humble opinion—utterly inexcusable behavior for anyone who has ever taken the Hippocratic oath. But, it wouldn't be the first time that a doctor didn't know everything—in fact, this next inflammation factor is probably overlooked by conven-

tional medicine just as often.

What happens to your body when free radicals reign

You've probably heard something about free radicals before—and whatever it was, it probably wasn't good. Free radicals (or reactive oxygen species as they're also called) are rogue oxygen molecules that are missing an electron. In an attempt to replace it, they run around your body damaging any tissue that happens to fall in their path.

What might surprise you, though, is that these free radicals are a natural and normal byproduct of the energy production that's constantly taking place inside our cells. In small amounts they're even useful—your immune system will sometimes create them to help combat viruses and bacteria.

Unusually large amounts, on the other hand, result in oxidative stress—and, not surprisingly, this condition is also associated with a wide variety of diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and cancer. (Is any of this starting to sound familiar?)

Oxidative stress can lead to chronic inflammation in several ways—but just to give you a good idea, I'll explain the two ways that are talked about the most.

The first is by means of a molecule called NF Kappa B (NFKB). NFKB hangs out inside your cells, listening for messages, so that it can tell your genes which chemicals to make for your body. But like your

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WASTE NOT, WANT NOT: 10 ABSOLUTELY FREE WAYS TO GET MORE NUTRITION FROM YOUR FOOD

What I'm about to tell you will change the way you think about garbage forever.

Chances are good that even if you make the effort to eat a healthy diet, you've been tossing some of the most nutritious parts of your food into the trash. Even some things that don't seem like they'd be edible are—and contain big doses of nutrients your body needs.

So read through the following list and see what you've been missing from food you've already bought and paid for.

1 Potato skins

Potatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C, potassium, and fiber. In fact, they contain up to 3 grams of fiber: As much as a serving of that awful Metamucil stuff some doctors try to get people to gag down.

But you only get these benefits if you leave the skin on. It's got all nearly all the fiber, and without it, potatoes can lose up to 50 percent of their nutrients during cooking. Keep in mind, though, that potatoes rank in the top 10 for pesticide residue, and nearly all of it is on the skin, so be sure to buy organic.

2 Carrot tops

Don't even bother buying the pre-packaged, mutilated things

passing for carrots in most grocery stores. Get your carrots fresh from a local farmer's market with their green tops still on.

The tops are an excellent source of vitamins and trace minerals. They're also bitter, but we could all benefit from small amounts of bitter foods in our diet since they aid digestion. I suggest cutting your carrots up in their entirety and tossing the whole thing into your salad or soup to liven it up.

3 Apple skins

Peel your apple and you lose up to 50 percent of its valuable disease-fighting antioxidants and fiber (a whopping 5 grams per apple). Apple skins are high in quercetin, which forms a dynamic duo with vitamin C to support the immune system and prevent disease. In fact, a recent study showed that apple skins boost anti-cancer cell activity by 50 percent.

Of course, this is another instance where you should be worried about the pesticide content of the apples you find in most supermarkets. You're much better off buying locally grown, organic apples.

4 Egg yolks

Egg-white omelets are just another bizarre, unfounded, killjoy

idea like “low fat diets” and “drink your milk,” cooked up by a health care system that needs to go back and check its science. The fact is, egg yolks contain almost all of the egg's calcium, iron, folate, and vitamins B₆, A, D, and K.

Yes, they are high in cholesterol, but so what? Repeated studies have shown eating an egg or two a day has very little effect on overall cholesterol levels in the body, and there's no evidence that they're associated with an increased risk of heart disease. In fact, if you get organic omega eggs (which come from hens fed diets high in omega-3 fatty acids), you may actually improve your cholesterol level.

5 Coffee berries

Historically, coffee has been brewed from the roasted beans. The rest of the whole coffee berry (also called the “cherry”) is discarded. But the whole coffee berry is loaded with antioxidants—more on an ounce-per-ounce basis than blueberries—and several rare but essential specific sugars that the body uses for important cell-to-cell communication. Cells need to talk to each other for your body to function. The clearer the signals, the better your state of health. Some things, like trans fats, gum up the works. These essential sugars help

things run smoothly.

Coffee berries aren't widely available yet, but keep your eyes open: I'd be willing to bet that you'll start seeing them included in various drinks and other health foods soon. In the meantime, you can get coffee berries in supplement from a Vermont company called New Chapter.

6 Juicer pulp

So you bought a juicer and now you're enjoying lots of fresh, healthy fruit and vegetable juices. But if you're tossing out the pulp that accumulates in the strainer, you're missing out on all the fiber, as well as important amounts of fructo-oligosaccharides (FOS, for short). These prebiotics are fuel for the healthy bacteria in your gut, helping support a healthy immune system. If you don't like pulp in your juice, save it to use in soups, sauces, or smoothies.

7 Vegetable "liquor"

Most nutritionists will tell you to steam all your greens. While that is the healthiest thing to do, it's also okay to lightly boil them, too. Just make sure you save the leftover water, or "liquor," as one of my friend's Italian grandfathers called it. The water contains all the nutrients you boiled off from the vegetables. You can drink it straight or incorporate it into soups or gravies. (By the way, my friend's grandfather made a habit of drinking the liquor from his greens, and he lived into his 90s—

you never know!)

8 Citrus fruit seeds

As strange as it will seem the first few times, don't spit out the seeds from your oranges, grapefruits, lemons, or tangerines. Just chew them up well and swallow them. They have an extra supply of vitamins C and K, potassium, and magnesium along with an antioxidant called ellagic acid, which may have significant anti-cancer activity.

9 Tea bags

It's true that you do get the most nutritional bang from the initial cup of tea—the antioxidant content (and the flavor) will just be weaker after the first brew. But this tip is really more for the health of your wallet—and your plants. Brewing a couple of cups of tea from the same tea bag will save you money. Then when you're done using the tea bag a couple of times, save it, and when you have enough, use them to line the bottom of plant pots: They help hold moisture and nourish the soil.

10 Dinner leftovers

One of my biggest pet peeves is when people throw out their dinner leftovers. The other one is when people underestimate the importance of a big, hearty, balanced breakfast. And one of the best breakfasts you can have is one made from leftovers from the night before.

Compared the usual muffin,

bagel, donut, piece of toast, bowl of cereal, or processed-carb, dessert-like farce that passes for the day's first meal, a balanced meal of leftovers can be a health-promoting, energy-enhancing, life-extending feast. You'll have more energy through the morning and fewer cravings. And a big meal first thing also makes your body burn more calories the rest of the day.

If there's one clear message I want you to take away from the list above, it should be that the healthiest part of most fruits and vegetables is the skin. That's where the majority of the vitamins, minerals, and fiber are stored. But it's also where pesticide residues build up—and no amount of washing can get rid of those chemicals once they've taken hold. That's why it pays to know where your food comes from—that it's not a source that uses these potentially dangerous sprays. Buy organic, local foods whenever possible, and use as much of them as you can. Waste not, want not! **HR**

Check out my online forum

Be sure to visit my new website, www.HealthRevelations.com. One of my favorite features is the Reader Forum. Just click on the button at the top of the home page and you can post your questions, see what cures are working for other readers and even discuss my articles. It's a terrific resource and it's FREE.

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typical bad egg on the block, free radicals tend to be a negative influence. When they “talk” to NFKB, it stimulates the production of all kinds of inflammatory chemicals.

Another role that oxidative stress plays in causing inflammation is to assist in the formation of advanced glycation end-products (AGEs)—or more simply, cells that have too many sugar molecules stuck on them. When an excess of free radicals mingles with the extra sugar floating around in your blood—whether it’s the result of diabetes, or simply from overfeeding on cheap carbohydrates and not moving around enough to burn off the excess—these nasty end-products are spawned. AGEs accelerate aging in every possible way—which is one reason why many diabetics seem to grow old well before their time.

There’s no question that you know your adversary by now. I’ve gone over the role that obesity, gut problems, environmental toxins, and free radicals all play in causing your chronic inflammation.

So I’ll get right to the part where the real work begins: actually putting together a plan to help you defeat this enemy for good—no dangerous drugs required.

Beating inflammation by way of body and mind

Any serious attempt to prevent inflammation should start with diet. And the Mediterranean stan-

dard is the best one to keep: Make sure to include a wide variety of multi-colored fruits and vegetables (again, not just French fries, catsup and iceberg lettuce), moderate amounts of cooked whole grains, all sorts of nuts and beans, fish, fowl and lean meats—plus smaller amount of eggs and dairy, preferably in the form of butter, full-fat cheese, and cultured products like yogurt.

As a general rule, of course, you’re much better off with natural or organic foods—preferably local, whenever possible. What else? Cook mostly with olive or canola oil—cold-pressed if you can. You can also include tea, dark chocolate (just a few squares as a treat, a few days a week), and wine in moderation—they’re all loaded with hundreds of health-supportive, disease-preventing (and exceptionally delicious) antioxidants.

When it comes to anti-inflammatory supplements, adding some omega-3 fatty acids to your regimen is great place to start—especially in the form of eicosapentanoic acid (EPA), a key anti-inflammatory fat that confers a host of health benefits, including protection for your heart and increased insulin receptivity. I recommend adding 2,000 mg of EPA per day. Probiotics (healthy gut bacteria found in fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, and sauerkraut) can also help.

Important anti-inflammatory herbs are boswellia (an Ayurvedic herb from India), tumeric (which is found in curry), ginger, and

rosemary. Resveratrol (found in grape skins and red wine) is also a powerful anti-inflammatory—and one that is especially helpful in protecting against cancer and extending a healthy life span.

As far as anti-inflammatory vitamins go, vitamin D (at least 1,000 to 2,000 units a day) may be the most important—although you clearly need adequate amounts of vitamins A, C, and E along with the minerals zinc, magnesium, potassium, and selenium.

Exercise is another proven inflammation-reducer, partly as a result of its fat-burning effect—remember, fat cells increase inflammation. You should get 30 to 45 minutes of vigorous exercise (the kind where you really work up a sweat) at least five days a week—with some strength training also fit in for at least two of those days. And make sure you get a professional to help you devise a routine and to show you good exercise form—just slopping around on your own is a surefire way to get injured!

Finally, managing physical and emotional stress is a large, essential piece of the anti-inflammation puzzle—which means not only cutting down the stress in your environment, but also learning how to cope with it better when it arises. Good nutrition and exercise can both help this, as can a wide variety of mind-body techniques, including meditation, deep-breathing exercises, and acupuncture. My advice here is simple: Try the one that appeals to you the most. A positive and receptive attitude is essential to any therapy. **HR**

4 common-sense steps to beating varicose veins

Try walking a mile in the shoes of someone who's got varicose veins. Better yet, try walking a mile in their legs—their swollen, throbbing, burning, itching legs. It would become quickly—and painfully—clear to anyone who doubts it that they aren't "just" a cosmetic problem. Not by a long shot.

But there are a few common-sense steps you can take to reduce the pain and even prevent your varicose veins from getting worse.

#1: Press the issue

Start by investing in a good pair of compression stockings. They may not be the most attractive things, but they do work. (And they also come in more colors and styles than they used to, so it doesn't have to be obvious to everyone else that you're wearing them).

#2: Move it and lose it

From there, start exercising. Sounds a bit counterintuitive, but exercises that work the leg muscles, such as squats and cycling, help push blood back up through your leg veins to your heart.

It'll also help you lose weight, and even a 10- to 20-pound weight loss can make a big difference when it comes to easing the pain of varicose veins.

#3: Stock up on vein-strengthening supplements

Here are a few supplements that are worth trying.

► **Horse chestnut** is the best-known natural treatment for varicose veins. It helps prevent swelling and strengthens capillary and vein walls. The usual dose is 300 mg a day. Side effects are pretty rare, but if you start feeling itchy or nauseous, taper back your dose. Nature's Way has a widely available, quality product I generally recommend.

► **Grape seed extract** also supports the walls of blood vessels. Take 150 to 300 mg in divided doses over the course of a day. I like the Activin product from Dry Creek Nutrition.

► **Bilberry** is actually a European type of blueberry. Best known for supporting healthy vision, it can also be useful for varicose veins. It's similar to grape seed extract. Use 24 to 320 mg a day.

► **Bromelain**, an enzyme from pineapple, can help prevent the hard lumpy skin that develops around varicose veins. Take 500 to 750 mg two or three times a day.

► **Butcher's Broom** is also another safe—and affordable—supplement that's helpful. It works by constricting your blood vessels and improving your overall blood flow. Its anti-inflammatory properties have been used for over two thousand years to relieve the swelling and

pain of varicose veins.

They're all safe—on their own and together—so don't be afraid to combine them. But it's important to note that all of the above remedies are best used under the supervision of an experienced practitioner—especially Butcher's Broom, which can increase blood pressure. A wise practitioner will help you work out the best combination of remedies for your particular case.

#4: Get out of line

Finally, avoid standing in one place for too long a time. It sounds too simple to even bother mentioning, but you'd be surprised how many people don't realize the amount of time they spend on their feet each day: All those lines at the bank, supermarket, etc. add up.

My advice? Find a neighborhood kid and pay him or her a few bucks to run your errands for you. Your legs will thank you for it!

If none of these measures work for you and you do wind up needing surgery, there's a new laser technique that's safe and non-invasive, and it makes varicose veins slowly fade and disappear. It works by sending strong bursts of light onto the vein. I've seen great results in people who have gotten it done. The main drawback is that insurance generally won't pay for it unless you're having serious symptoms such as pain, cramping, itching, or ulcers. **HR**

Your Questions Answered

Calcium RDA: A prostate disaster waiting to happen

Q *I've heard drinking milk and getting too much calcium may increase the risk of prostate cancer. My husband is 55 and although he doesn't have prostate cancer himself, his brother was diagnosed with it when he was 60. Should I be concerned?*

—Anne S., Peoria, IL

A There is some scientific evidence to suggest too much calcium may increase the risk of prostate cancer. And in this country the “recommended” daily calcium intake for men—1,000 to 1,200 mg a day—falls under that “too much” umbrella. (Thank the dairy industry lobby for that.) In Great Britain the recommendation is only 700 mg of calcium a day, based on the same data. But even that's pushing it.

In one study, men who consumed over 600 mg a day from dairy products had a 32 percent higher risk of getting prostate cancer than those who consumed less than 150 mg day. In another study, men getting over 2,000 mg of calcium a day had 4.6 times the risk of prostate cancer than guys getting less than 500 mg a day.

Look, I'm not condemning all dairy: Small amounts of cheese, butter, and fermented milk products like yogurt or kefir are fine. But

there's just no good reason for most adult men to slop down several glasses of milk a day. Or even one, for that matter.

But the real issue here may not be the dairy or calcium themselves. The problem is that increased calcium intake can decrease vitamin D levels in the body—and vitamin D protects against most cancers, including prostate cancer.

So instead of focusing too much on the calcium side of the equation, it's even more important to make sure your husband gets enough vitamin D. Given his family history, I would have his vitamin D level checked (be sure to get a 25-hydroxy vitamin D level—it's the only reliable indicator of your body's stores of the vitamin).

You want it above 40 nanograms per milliliter. If it's not, get some good quality vitamin D₃ supplements and have him start taking 2,000 to 4,000 units a day. If he's already there,

1,000 units a day can be okay for maintenance, but he may need 2,000 to 4,000 units daily to get his level up otherwise. Levels should be rechecked after two to three months.

In addition, he should consider getting 20 to 30 minutes of direct sunlight (that means no sunscreen) a day at least three times a week.

In addition to the cancer-prevention basics (regular exercise and a diet high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, fish, and lean meats), he should also get 30 grams of fiber, 100 to 200 micrograms of selenium (from foods like sardines, brazil nuts, oats, and chard), and 20 mg of lycopene (from cooked tomato products like all-natural spaghetti sauce) per day. All of these nutrients support prostate health and may protect against cancer.

The text contained herein does not constitute medical advice. Health Revelations advises that you consult your own physician before acting on any recommendations contained within this publication.

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