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Diet, chronic inflammation, and your health

What do arthritis, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, cancer, psoriasis and asthma all have in common? These seemingly unrelated disorders, along with others, do have a common thread: inflammation.

When you sprain your ankle and it swells, that's inflammation at work, and it's a normal reaction to an injury. With time and treatment, the inflammation around your ankle goes away and the area returns to normal.

But what would happen if you had a source of inflammation that just wouldn't go away? And what if that inflammation wasn't limited to the ankle but occurred throughout your body? Such a situation is called chronic low-grade inflammation. We are beginning to understand that such a situation may be quite common and, instead of being a helpful reaction, is very bad for your health.

Take cardiovascular disease, for example. Cardiovascular dis-

ease is the number one killer of Americans, responsible for approximately one of every two deaths in the U.S. Atherosclerosis, which is the formation of blockages (plaques) within the arteries, is a major contributor to cardiovascular disease. It is now strongly agreed that atherosclerosis is an inflammatory process. This is the basis for a relatively new blood test, called CRP-HS (which stands for C-Reactive Protein — High Sensitivity), which can help identify those at risk for atherosclerosis and related problems (including death!).

Many other health problems have inflammation at their root, including chronic pain itself. For this reason, those interested in improving their health need to consider ways to reduce their own levels of inflammation. Fortunately, you have several very powerful, natural anti-inflammatory approaches at your fingertips. These are things you

DR. PROODIAN'S HEALTH CORNER



By: Dr. James Proodian

can implement today!

First, start eating more vegetables and fruits. Why? Because these foods contain a complex array of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and other phytochemicals which exert anti-inflammatory effects throughout the body. It is recommended that we get five servings each of vegetables and fruits per day. Unfortunately, studies have shown that most Americans consume far less than this.

Next, and very importantly, you need to change the types of fats you consume. In previous articles in this column, I have written about special fats called 'essential fatty acids'. This class of fats is divided into Omega-3

and Omega-6 varieties, and how much of each you consume is vital. For optimal health, we should be eating roughly equal amounts of Omega-3s and Omega-6s. The reality, however, is that most of us eat far too many Omega-6s, which creates an imbalance that, believe it or not, leads to excessive inflammation. Your next step, therefore, is to increase your consumption of Omega-3 fats, and the most effective way to do this is to take fish oil supplements. Of course, eating more cold-water fish (salmon, herring, rainbow trout, mackerel) and reducing intake of saturated fats and common cooking oils (corn, soybean, cottonseed) is helpful as well.

Another simple step toward reducing the negative effects of inflammation is to supplement your diet with additional antioxidants. There are many such formulas available, all of which add protection against harmful free radicals. These free radicals

cause damage to cells, which in turn contributes to higher levels of inflammation.

Reducing the level of chronic inflammation in your body is a key component to maximizing health and wellness, but one that is often not adequately addressed. While the suggestions I have made are really only the 'tip of the iceberg,' just getting started is the most crucial step. Why wait?

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Dr. James Proodian is an author, educator, and healthcare practitioner specializing in Chiropractic Rehabilitation and other natural healing techniques. He also provides free health lectures and health screenings for companies, clubs, schools, churches, and other organizations in the local area. Dr. Proodian can be reached at his practice, Natural Healthcare Center of West End, at 732-222-2219.