

# The Inflammation Factor

A never-ending battle in the body between good and evil

written by Christine Darragh

**I**nflammation can either heal you or kill you. When it responds correctly, it acts swiftly to signal distress and call in the necessary immunity response troops to address an ailment; when it goes rogue, it becomes a warning beacon that flashes incessantly, trying desperately to win a battle that never ends, leading to multiple diseases or even death.

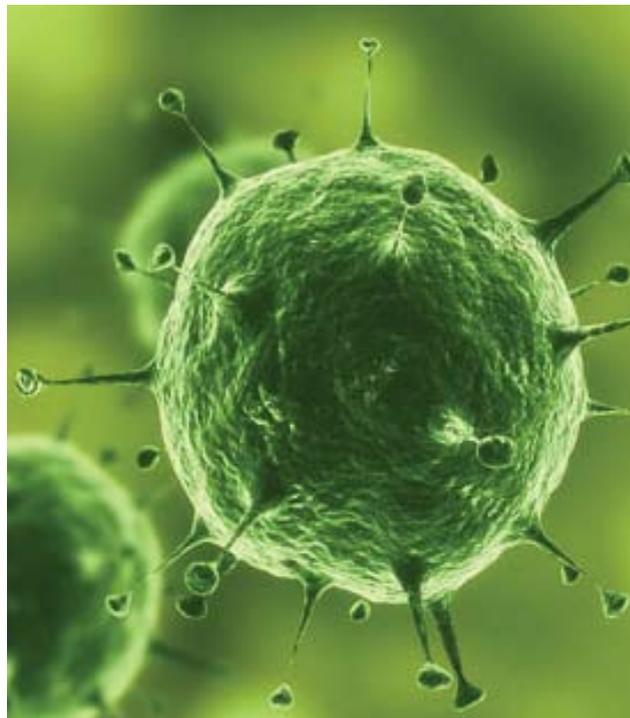
The body is an amazing piece of machinery. Its incredible awareness to respond when needed and take action to balance and correct situations it discovers is crucial to maintaining optimum health. The presence of inflammation in the body is no different.

However, while *acute* inflammation is seen where the immune system appropriately counters infection or injury by periodically activating inflammatory chemicals to combat foreign substances, then relaxes once the condition has passed, *chronic* inflammation becomes an ongoing, systemic conflict within the body. The low-grade, persistent nature of chronic inflammation keeps the body believing it needs to operate in constant defense mode, determined to oust any invaders and striving to correct the trouble it perceives.

The body knows it needs to be fighting something, valiantly releasing more and more inflammatory chemicals, but becomes confused and over-burdened, seemingly attacking itself when the normal “react/conquer” immunity response doesn’t appear to work. Low or compromised immunity is a very dangerous situation, especially over long periods of time, usually resulting in a risky medical slide of serious conditions, including autoimmune diseases.

Joanne Garrison, owner of Circle of Health clinic in Niagara Falls, commonly sees symptoms of ongoing inflammation, often without the client realizing the impact of continued reliance on numerous over-the-counter or pharmaceutical products taken to manage physical complaints. Her suggestion is to always treat the base, primary problem, not the symptoms your body is creating to cope with it. Hidden allergens, infections, environmental toxins, and an inflammatory diet or stress are typically the real causes of these inflammatory conditions. The goal is to help your body effectively help itself by recognizing and treating the root concern.

“Most ‘itis’ conditions are a way to label ‘inflammation of...’ a particular area in the body,” says Garrison. “From a



holistic perspective, your body generally creates an inflammatory response because of injury, bacteria, virus, toxins or foods. Rather than suppressing the inflammation with anti-inflammatory pharmaceuticals, simply addressing the source of inflammation and supporting your body’s defence response can rid yourself of chronic inflammatory conditions.”

As with any health situation, one key to success is starting with an appropriate diet. She adds, “The primary foods which create inflammation in the body are sugars, artificial additives (including processed foods), nightshade vegetables (potatoes, tomatoes and eggplant), refined grains, alcohol, dairy and trans fats. Alternatively, there are foods which help to reduce inflammation in the body which include fruits, dark green leafy vegetables, lean poultry and fish, and lots of water.”

Negative lifestyle factors such as prolonged stress, poor diet and lack of exercise only compound inflammation issues. The immune system continues to release inflammatory chemicals trying to compensate, acting insistently on our behalf as acute protection for our unaltered bad choices, even when there are no tangible enemies to rapidly fight off.

Why should this matter so much?

Identifying any chronic, hidden inflammation is like receiving a major health gift. You may be able to protect against a growing number of critical conditions now known to be inflammation-related over the long term, including heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, asthma, even Alzheimer’s disease, and effectively prevent unnecessary premature aging for your entire body.

Likewise, notes Dr. Mark Hyman, a physician and health advocate, “Auto-immune diseases, specifically, now affect 24 million people and include rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, multiple sclerosis, celiac and thyroid disease, psoriasis, inflammatory bowel disease, and many more. These are often addressed by powerful immune suppressing medication and not by addressing the cause. That’s like taking a lot of aspirin while you are standing on a



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tack. The treatment is not more aspirin or a strong immune suppressant, but removing the tack.”

Everything in the body is connected, and multiple problems can be linked together by the root source of an unknown inflammation. For instance, various high-risk inflammatory conditions in one studied patient—high blood pressure, asthma, gastro-reflux, colitis and alopecia (hair loss)—were all finally treated by a simple gluten allergy diagnosis, with the underlying origin of this irritation affecting every other body system adversely in defence.

This eye-opening example should be proof enough to take a serious look at inflammatory issues as part of a continuing effort to live your best life.

## 8 WAYS TO REDUCE & AVOID INFLAMMATION

Taking a comprehensive approach to inflammation and balancing your immune system will help address one of the most important systems of the body. Once you figure out the root cause and get rid of it, how do you live an anti-inflammatory lifestyle?

- 1 Eat a whole-foods, high fiber, plant-based diet which is inherently anti-inflammatory. That means unprocessed, unrefined, real food and high in powerful anti-inflammatory plant chemicals called phytonutrients. Nothing full of sugar or trans fats.
- 2 Get an oil change. Eat healthy fats from olive oil, nuts, avocados and omega 3 fats from small fish like sardines, herring, sable, and wild salmon.
- 3 Exercise. Regular exercise may help prevent inflammation-related brain damage characteristic in Alzheimer's Disease.
- 4 Learn to actively relax to engage your vagus nerve, the powerful nerve that relaxes your whole body and lowers inflammation, by doing yoga, meditation, deep breathing or even taking a hot bath. Muscle massage also helps to reduce inflammation.
- 5 If you have food allergies, find out what they are and stop eating them.
- 6 Take probiotics (“good bacteria”) daily to help your digestion to improve the healthy bacteria in your gut which reduce inflammation. (Look for those containing 10 billion CFU of bifidobacteria species and lactobacillus species. Choose from reputable brands.)
- 7 Take a multi-vitamin and mineral supplement which helps reduce inflammation.
- 8 Get enough sleep. Research has found that decreased sleep triggers an increase in inflammatory enzymes that trigger the body's protective inflammatory response. NM

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