# Create Healthy Meals With Anti-Inflammatory Foods

What we eat can either increase or decrease inflammation in the body.

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As a natural response mounted by the immune system to fight off pathogens or promote healing from injury to the body, short-term inflammation can be helpful. But when inflammation persists and becomes chronic, it can build in intensity, fueling further damage or disease. However, lifestyle habits—especially food choices—can help tame this tiger.

To ease inflammation, experts suggest increasing one's daily intake of anti-inflammatory foods in the recommended portions. The list below is not exhaustive, but it can help build a healthy eating plan.

Fruits and veggies: Focus on a rainbow when choosing these foods. Think blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, boysenberries and cranberries. Opt for leafy greens such as romaine, red leaf and green leaf lettuces, spinach, Swiss chard, watercress and dandelion greens as well as kale, mustard and turnip greens. In addition, crunchy vegetables such as arugula, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, collard greens, kohlrabi, radishes and rutabaga are smart choices.

Whole grains: These are ground or crushed grains with the entire kernel—germ, endosperm and bran—intact. A few tasty staples are cornmeal, oats, quinoa, bulgur, amaranth, millet, brown or wild rice, barley, farro and spelt.

Protein: Sources of this vital nutrient abound. Choose from among plant-based proteins, such as beans, edamame, nuts and nut butters, tofu and tempeh; seafood that includes a variety of fish (salmon, sardines, black sea bass, mackerel and freshwater trout) and shellfish for adequate amounts of omega-3 fatty acids; eggs (enriched with omega-3 or those labeled pastured); and organic (when possible) white meats (chicken, pork and turkey) and red meats (beef and lamb) up to twice each week.

Healthy oils and fats: Try extra virgin or expeller pressed olive, avocado, peanut, macadamia nut, corn, peanut or walnut oil; olives, avocados and nuts (almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, peanuts, pecans and pistachios). As a bonus, these wholesome sources of healthy fats also contain micronutrients in the form of antioxidants and phytochemicals.

Dairy: Whether milk promotes or reduces inflammation is up for debate, as findings offer conflicting evidence. Scientists advise people to use common sense and see how their bodies respond to milk products. In addition, plant-based milks provide a healthy alternative to regular dairy.

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