A Majority of Americans Eat Inflammatory Foods

About 57% of U.S. adults analyzed routinely eat inflammatory foods, increasing their risk for chronic conditions.

October 15, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

About 6 in 10 adults regularly consume a pro-inflammatory diet, which can increase the risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, kidney disease and more, according to a study published in Public Health Nutrition.

Researchers found that about 57% of U.S. adults frequently eat foods that increase their risk for chronic inflammation. Such foods include fried foods, processed meats, refined carbohydrates, foods high in salt and foods containing trans fats.

Inflammation is the body's natural response to injury, illness or the presence of germs or toxins, according to the Cleveland Clinic. While inflammation is a normal, important process that allows the body to heal, it can also be associated with health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, certain cancers and autoimmune diseases, including lupus and rheumatoid arthritis.

For the study, researchers analyzed the self-reported diets of about 60,000 Black, Latino and white adults included in the 2005–2018 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, according to Health. Using the energy-adjusted dietary inflammatory index, researchers scored each person's diet.

"This measurement of dietary inflammation uses 45 food components that include nutrients (such as vitamins), foods (such as garlic and onion), compounds (such as flavonoids) and drinks (such as green/black tea and alcohol)," study author Rachel Meadows, PhD, a professor at the Center for Epidemiology and Healthcare Delivery Research, told Health. "Each of these food items has a score on its pro-inflammatory or anti-inflammatory level. Then an overall inflammatory diet score is created for each person based on a person's entire diet."

According to the study's findings Black Americans, men, young adults and people with lower education and income were more likely to eat inflammatory foods. Meadows noted that these individuals may have more difficulty accessing anti-inflammatory foods as well as less knowledge about diet and its health effects.

Indeed, when it comes to diet, studies show that Black people consume less vegetables, dietary fiber, whole grains, milk and other nutrients compared with white people.

To reduce the risk for negative health conditions, including inflammation, some experts recommend adhering to a plant-based or Mediterranean diet, which typically consists of whole grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts, fish, legumes, seeds, herbs and spices. Anti-inflammatory foods rich in omega-3s (chia seeds, salmon, flaxseed and nuts) and fiber (beans, legumes and whole grains) are also recommended.

To learn more, click #Diet or #Inflammation. There, you'll find headlines such as "Benefits of Plant-Based Diet in Black Adults," "MIND Diet Reduces Signs of Alzheimer's Disease" and "Research in Context: Obesity and Metabolic Health."

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