

WellnessAdvocate

Inflammation and Your Health



Unlike the typical diet, it doesn't have a catchy name. Nor does it promise you'll drop a size by Saturday. It's not even really a diet, per se, but actually an eating plan for life. It's called the anti-inflammatory diet—or rather, anti-inflammatory diets. Several books are based on the anti-inflammatory idea—and numerous websites promote "anti-inflammatory" eating. Each has its own spin.

Barry Sears, MD, of *The Zone* diet fame and Andrew Weil, MD, the Harvard-trained natural and preventive medicine physician, say the anti-inflammatory diet is ideal for overall good health. Proponents of the diet say it can reduce heart disease risk, keep existing cardiac problems in check, reduce blood triglycerides and blood pressure, and soothe tender and stiff arthritic joints.

But experts concede that anti-inflammation eating is more effective for some health problems than others—and that the scientific evidence for the disease-reduction benefits of these eating plans is still being gathered.

While each plan has its own twist, all are based on the general concept that out-of-control inflammation in the body leads to ill health, and that eating to avoid it can ward off disease, says Russell Greenfield, MD, a clinical assistant professor of medicine at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a private-practice physician who studied under Weil. "It's very clear that inflammation plays a role much more than we thought with respect to certain maladies," notes Greenfield.

Sears calls inflammation a silent epidemic that triggers chronic diseases over the years. "You could feel fine but have high levels of inflammation," he warns.

The average American diet, Greenfield says, includes far too many foods rich in omega-6 fatty acids, found in processed and fast foods, and far too few rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as those found in cold-water fish. When that balance is out of whack, inflammation can set in, Sears explains.

Tips for reducing inflammation:

- ▶ Eat 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- ▶ Minimize saturated and trans fats.
- ▶ Eat good sources of omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, soybeans, cauliflower and walnuts (2-6 times per week).
- ▶ Watch your intake of refined carbohydrates such as white rice.
- ▶ Work to include more whole grains and brown rice in your diet.
- ▶ Eat lean protein sources such as chicken and cut back on red meat and full-fat dairy foods.
- ▶ Avoid refined foods and processed foods.
- ▶ Spice it up! Ginger and curry, among others, can reduce inflammation.

It's not surprising that anti-inflammatory diets have gotten popular, says Elisa Zied, RD, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association and a dietitian in New York City.

While they may have some merit, she cautions: "Individual foods should not be the focus. You need to pay attention to your overall pattern." And reducing inflammation is not just about what you eat, she says. Maintaining a healthy body weight is the best thing you can do to reduce inflammation," Zied says.

(Article courtesy of WebMD)

December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month

Prevent Blindness America has declared December as Safe Toys and Gifts Awareness Month. The group encourages everyone to consider giving toys that suit the age and individual skills of the child who will receive it, especially for infants and children under age three.

This holiday season (and beyond), please use the following guidelines for choosing safe toys for all ages:

- ▶ Inspect all toys before purchasing. Avoid those that shoot or include parts that fly off. The toy should have no sharp edges or points and should be sturdy enough to withstand impact without breaking, being crushed or being pulled apart easily.
- ▶ Look for labels that assure you the toys have passed a safety inspection – “ATSM” means the toy has met the American Society for Testing and Materials standards.
- ▶ Make sure you have the appropriate protective gear for your child if he/she receives sports equipment.
- ▶ Keep kids safe from lead in toys by: educating yourself about lead exposure from toys, symptoms of lead poisoning, what kinds of toys have been recalled and being aware that old toys may be more likely to contain lead in the paint.
- ▶ Avoid giving toys with small parts to young children as they tend to put things in their mouths, increasing the risk of choking. If the piece can fit inside a toilet paper roll, it is not appropriate for kids under age three.

For more information:

www.preventblindness.org/children/safetoys.html

http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/home/safe_toys.html

Recipe: Hearty Turkey Chili

Ingredients

2 cups chopped zucchini	1 1/2 tablespoons chili powder (at least!)
1 teaspoon olive oil	1 teaspoon cumin
1 cup chopped onion	2 cups diced canned tomatoes, no-salt or low salt
2 cups chopped celery	4 cups canned kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1 cup chopped bell peppers	2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
2 teaspoons chopped fresh garlic	1 teaspoon brown sugar
1 pound chopped cooked turkey	

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 475 F. Spray a glass baking dish with cooking spray. Arrange the zucchini in a single layer in the baking dish. Roast for 8 to 10 minutes until slightly tender and lightly browned.
2. While the zucchini is roasting, add the oil and chopped onions to a dutch oven or soup pot. Saute over low heat until the onions are browned. Add the celery and peppers and continue to saute. Add garlic, turkey, chili powder and cumin seed. Cover and simmer for about 5 minutes.
3. Stir in the tomatoes, kidney beans, vegetable broth, brown sugar and the roasted zucchini. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Ladle into warmed individual bowls. Serve immediately. Makes 8 servings.

Nutrition Information per serving (1 1/2 cups): 252 calories | 4 g fat | 178 mg sodium
28 g carbohydrates | 8 g dietary fiber | 0.5 g sugar | 26 g protein | 57 mg cholesterol

