



Wellness Review April

Inflammation Essential to Life

Everyone has experienced the remarkable phenomenon of acute inflammation - a sprained ankle, splinter, or cut – and as a result have witnessed the affected area turn red, puffy and hot as your immune system rushes to your aid to assess the injury and fight any pathogen that might have entered your body. A normal, healthy inflammatory response should flare up and die down again a short time later, as the healing process resolves the inflammation and the injury heals. Pain and inflammation should not be chronic, it should go away - but what if it doesn't?

Inflammatory Snowball Effect

Imagine if you kept injuring yourself in the same location repetitively. The result would be unresolved ongoing inflammation. However, not all inflammation has a visible injury. For example, if there is inflammation in your gut, the only symptom may be some niggling gut issues, yet you cannot 'see' the problem. Nevertheless, there may be an inflammatory snowball effect occurring inside. Unresolved inflammation, visible or not, becomes more problematic the longer it keeps interfering with the normal workings of your body, and has been linked to many types of chronic disease such as arthritis, heart disease, obesity, autoimmune conditions like inflammatory bowel disease, Hashimoto's Thyroiditis, Multiple Sclerosis and Rheumatoid Arthritis, Type 2 diabetes and even cancers.

Natural therapies such as herbal medicines, nutritional supplements and dietary and lifestyle modifications can help reduce this harmful inflammation as well as alleviate the unpleasant side effects including pain and swelling.

Stop Inflammation Going 'Through the Roof'

Nobody wants to be in pain, and for optimal health it is important to stop abnormal inflammation in its tracks. Pharmaceutical anti-inflammatories are commonly used to help relieve persistent pain, however some medications may be accompanied by unwanted side effects if used ongoing. Fortunately, natural treatments such as herbs and nutritional supplements offer a range of natural anti-inflammatory and pain relief solutions that can be individualised for your situation, whether you need acute care or more ongoing support.

Safe and Natural Solutions for Inflammation

Fortunately there are many safe and effective options to reduce inflammation and pain. One such option which many people may be aware of is fish and krill oil. There are also a number of herbal medicines that offer safe and effective anti-inflammatory support. Some of my favourites include:

- Boswellia is an Ayurvedic herb with a long history of use for pain relief and rheumatic and anti-inflammatory conditions. Boswellia can be used for all types of pain, but particularly arthritic or traumatic pain associated with inflammation. It has also been found to be effective for inflammatory bowel disease.
- Turmeric is also a traditional anti-inflammatory Ayurvedic herb that has a long history for use in injuries, as well as digestive and liver complaints. Recent research demonstrates it also helps reduce the swelling and pain of arthritic conditions.

- White Willow is actually the original herb from which aspirin is derived. It is a very effective analgesic or pain relieving agent especially when combined with other herbs.
- Herbs such as Devils claw, Californian Poppy, Corydalis and Jamaica dogwood, when combined, not only help reduce pain, but decrease spasms and improve blood flow, therefore support the healing process.

These anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving herbs are 'gut friendly' and safe for long-term use. There are many effective herbal products available which contain a combination of anti-inflammatory herbs to suit different conditions so you need to find the right product for your particular condition and symptoms.

Factors that Sustain Inflammation

It is important to learn which diet and lifestyle behaviours may be adding to inflammation in your body. Common causes include:

1. Smoking;
2. Being an unhealthy weight;
3. Eating a diet high in refined and processed carbohydrates (e.g. white bread, pasta, white rice and cereals);
4. Consuming 'trans' fats (e.g. fried or fast foods, packaged baked goods, vegetable fats used in some margarines);
5. Regular consumption of processed foods containing artificial preservatives, colouring, flavourings, sweeteners, glutamates and other chemicals;
6. Lack of vegetables which contain an abundance of anti-inflammatory phytochemicals including flavonoids;
7. Being sleep deprived or regular shift work;
8. Regularly consuming alcohol, coffee, excess sugar and table salt;
9. Experiencing ongoing digestive issues that upset the balance of 'good' bacteria (e.g. reflux, stomach pain, bloating, diarrhoea or constipation);
10. Experiencing ongoing psychological stress (unhappy employment situation, relationship problems, social isolation, moving house, working long hours, caring for a loved one with a serious disease, etc);
11. Lack of exercise or relaxation time.

Modifying any or all of these is an important step in a holistic approach to reducing inflammation that may be contributing to your pain or illness. If you relate to any of the above factors, take action.

Put an end to inflammation!

Don't let visible or invisible inflammation be a perpetuating problem! It is possible to regularly monitor your systemic inflammatory load through regular blood and other forms of testing. If inflammation is a problem it is possible to undertake a management plan involving safe and effective natural medicines and diet and lifestyle modifications to address any pain and inflammation you may have your individual health circumstances. Addressing inflammation can not only improve your quality of life now, but reduce your risk of chronic disease in future.

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