



Chronic **INFLAMMATION**

Three Healthy Lifestyle Changes

BY JESI HIRSCH, RN

Alzheimer's, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and arthritis. What do they have in common? Chronic inflammation. If you knew what caused these conditions, would you take control of your life so you could prevent them?

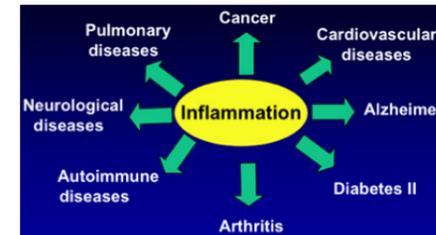
If we watch too much television, the drug companies would have us believing there is a magic pill that could turn all our diseases into a wonderful life. If that were true, we would all be healthy and happy.

You have an amazing immune system. It is your body's defense system against infection and illness. For example, if you sprain your ankle, your immune system kicks in. Your ankle swells up, it hurts, and the skin feels warm to the touch and turns red. This is acute inflammation, and it's what your body is supposed to do—fight off infections, increase blood flow to places that need healing, and generate pain as a signal that something is wrong. Without acute

inflammation, wounds and infections wouldn't heal.

Chronic inflammation (low-grade inflammation) is another product of your immune system. It can't be seen or felt with a touch to the skin. Chronic inflammation is similar to wood smoldering in a campfire. The fire (chronic inflammation) slowly burns down the wood (your arteries), and then the wood starts to fall apart. Chronic inflammation has a damaging effect on arteries,

causing heart attacks and strokes. It depresses the immune system, promotes formation of cancerous tumors, and destroys nerve cells in the brain. This is the immune system gone awry.



The good news is that we know many of the causes of chronic inflammation. There are three lifestyle changes you can make to address chronic inflammation: food, environmental toxins, and stress.

1. Inflammatory foods include sugar, vegetable oils, fried foods, dairy, gluten, artificial sweeteners and additives, and saturated fats. Anti-inflammatory foods include olive oil, green leafy vegetables, walnuts and almonds, wild salmon, sardines, strawberries, blueberries, broccoli, ginger, and turmeric. Eat more of these to help fight inflammation and chronic disease.
2. Environmental toxins are cancer-causing chemicals and endocrine disruptors—chemicals that may interfere with your endocrine system, such as the thyroid, adrenals, and pancreas. The immune system recognizes these chemicals as something that shouldn't be in your body, initiates an inflammatory response, and then attacks it. The continued exposure to these chemicals sets up chronic inflammation. What are these environmental toxins?
 - Heavy metals. Found in some fish, vaccines, drinking water, pesticides, and dental

amalgams, to name a few. These can cause cancer, neurological conditions, Alzheimer's, and damage to blood vessels.

- Pesticides. Found in bug sprays and commercially raised meats. These can cause cancer, Parkinson's disease, and nerve damage.
- Phthalates. Found in some plastic bottles and plastic food containers. These can cause endocrine system damage. It's important to limit your exposure to these toxins and many more.

3. Stress. It's a part of life; however, what's important is how you deal with it. Here are several antistress techniques: meditation, yoga, deep breathing, journaling, walking in nature, and anything else that calms your mind and brings you inner peace.

Love your immune system. Take care of it, and it will take care of you!

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NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LINE
(800) 273-8255 24hr/365day

RECOVERY DANE ADULT RESOURCE CENTER
(608) 237-1661
danecountyhumanservices.org/mentalhealth/adult

STOUGHTON HOSPITAL
Geriatric Psychiatry Inpatient Program
900 Ridge St., Stoughton 53589
(608) 873-2242
stoughtonhospital.com

NUTRITION/MEAL PROGRAMS

Check also the Aging & Caregiver Resources along with Safe & Healthy at Home sections.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING (AAA) OF DANE COUNTY
Nutrition Programs, My Meal-My Way, and Senior Farmers' Market Program (FMNP)
Co-located with ADRC
2865 N. Sherman Ave.
Madison 53704
(608) 240-7400
aaa.dcdhs.com

Well-balanced meals are available at dining centers throughout Dane County for those ages 60+. Visit website or call for information regarding center sites or meals delivered to homebound older adults. My Meal-My Way restaurant locations offer seniors a choice of 4-10 menu selections. All meals are on a donation basis, meaning you pay what you can afford with no set cost charged to dine. Senior Farmers' Market Program offers low-income adults, ages 60+, vouchers to purchase fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs from certified farmers. Join us in aging well by eating right.