



Happy and Healthy New Year!

What better way to start the New Year than with a renewed focus on your good health? Every year I am more convinced about how important our food and lifestyle choices are. This is a time of amazing research and learning about how the human body works. Here are tips for a healthy New Year.

Anti-Inflammatory Diet for 2009

Inflammation is a silent health problem that is at the root of many (if not most) western diseases. You can feel normal and still have high levels of inflammation. C-reactive protein is one marker, but there are other signs: weight around the middle that is hard to lose, upward creeping levels of cholesterol (especially LDL) or blood sugar and elevated blood pressure.

Pay attention and be proactive. The most powerful tool to lower inflammation is diet. What you eat can cause disease or keep you healthy. Wise food choices get at the root cause – unlike medications that just fix the symptoms. I'm not saying to stop taking your medications, but if you change how you eat you may need less. Use these anti-inflammatory eating tips to get started.

Weight control

Fat, especially the active form that we carry around our waist, is inflammatory. It is a bit of a catch-22: abdominal fat makes it harder to lose weight and increased weight makes it harder to lose fat. Ultimately a healthy diet and lifestyle is more important than weight.

Our metabolism drops as we age. Staying fit helps, but we still need less calories. Menopause also lowers calorie needs. Learn to be judicious with the “extras” as you get older – those are typically the foods that are inflammatory anyway.

Eat more omega-3 fats and less omega-6's, saturated and trans fats.

Omega-3 essential fatty acids are very powerful anti-inflammatory agents. They are found in cold water oily fish, walnuts, flax seeds, and canola oil. Olive oil is low in both omega-3's and 6's, but as a monounsaturated fat is also a good, choice with its own health benefits.

Omega-6 fats create inflammation. We need some omega-6 fats, but the typical diet contains too many. They are found in most vegetable oils, including corn, sunflower, and safflower oils. We get these in processed and fast foods.

Saturated fats are found in animal foods and tropical oils. Choose lean meats, and low fat or fat free dairy products and eat less of them. Processed meats such as lunch meats, hot

dogs and sausages contain chemicals such as nitrites that are associated with increased inflammation. Buy grass fed beef to improve the ratio of omega-3 and omega-6 fats.

Avoid trans fat by avoiding foods that list hydrogenated fats on the label. Even if it says zero trans fats, if it has hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil, there is some present.

Avoiding the lure of processed and fast foods might be easier when you realize that omega-6 fats lower your metabolic rate, making it harder to lose weight. Ditto with grain fed animals.

Eat more fish and plant protein

Meat and poultry are not the only way to get protein. Fish is high in omega-3 fats, especially wild salmon, sardines, lake trout, herring and yellowfin (chunk light) tuna. Good sources of plant protein include nuts, legumes (beans) and seeds. Soybeans, tempeh, tofu, and soy milk are also great sources.

Choose whole grains over sugar and refined carbs

Diets high in sugar are associated with inflammation. Limit high sugar foods such as sodas, fruit drinks, pre-sweetened coffee and tea, pastries, pre-sweetened cereals and candy.

Get most of your carbohydrates from whole grains, vegetables and fruits. The bread, cereal and pasta in your diet should be mostly 100% whole grain products. Whole grains are excellent sources of fiber and a high fiber diet reduces inflammation.

Choose green leafy vegetables, green and brightly colored vegetables and lots of fresh whole fruits.

Eat 5-9, and preferably more, servings of fruits and vegetables each day. The pigments in brightly colored fruits, vegetables and berries contain many phytonutrients that have anti-inflammatory properties.

Spice it up

Turmeric (contained in curry powder) and ginger are anti-inflammatory agents. Add turmeric or curry to roasted vegetables, soups and stews. Add ginger to cooked cereal, soups and stews. Other seasonings that are especially good include garlic, chili peppers, basil, cinnamon, rosemary and thyme.

Make 2009 a Healthy Year

Need help fine-tuning your health goals? Want to make sure your diet is anti-inflammatory? I can help you find what works for you: it makes it so much easier! Call me to find out more: 707 431-7524.

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

Are you ready to stop dieting and looking for a way of eating that is sustainable, enjoyable and healthy?

Discover Wellness from the Inside Out!

