

Anti-Inflammatory diet tips

You don't have to follow any anti-inflammatory (AI) diet perfectly to make a big impact. Anti-inflammatory diets may be a big adjustment for people who tend to eat different kinds of food, however, there are several resources which document how you can support and better manage inflammation through diet

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AI (anti-inflammatory) foods pose no harmful side effects and are relatively cheap and easy to get hold of. Here are some of our top tips for getting some AI foods into your diet.

1. Aim for half to two-thirds of your plate to be non-starchy vegetables (think: greens of all kinds, mushrooms, summer squash, beets, cauliflower...the list goes on and on)—ideally at breakfast, too.

They're packed with gut-balancing fibre and powerful antioxidants.

2. Limit added sugar and sweet drinks. That includes fruit juices and natural sweeteners like honey. Studies have shown that people who have a high-sugar diet have significantly elevated blood levels of haptoglobin (an inflammatory marker that in high concentrations is associated with diabetes, heart attack, stroke, and obesity) compared with controls.

3. Eat fish, especially fatty kinds like salmon, mackerel, herring, and anchovies. (Or take omega-3 supplements—check what is the appropriate amount for you or your child and seek advice from their GP or a dietician before starting any supplements). In some studies Omega 3 has also been shown to be potentially important in brain development and function. Nuts, seeds and green vegetables are also good sources of omega-3.

4. Limit white flour and limit other flour-based foods. Focus on whole, intact grains like quinoa, brown rice, and bulgur wheat. 100 percent white flour causes a spike in blood sugar that can exacerbate inflammation.

5. Choose fats carefully. The most abundant saturated fats in our diet contain the same fatty acids as do fragments of the cell walls of many bacteria; no wonder your immune system sees a bacon cheeseburger as a threat! Limit saturated fats like butter and vegetable oils such as sunflower and corn oils. Go for olive, rapeseed avocado, or walnut oil instead.

The Mediterranean diet is often referred to by medical professionals as the most effective anti-inflammatory diet as it's an eating plan and not just about individual foods.

There are several things a person can do to make the transition to an anti-inflammatory diet easier, including:

- eating a variety of fruits and vegetables
- reducing the amount of fast food eaten
- eliminating fizzy drinks and sugary beverages
- planning shopping lists to ensure healthful meals and snacks are on hand
- carrying small anti-inflammatory snacks while on the go
- drinking more water
- staying within the daily calorie requirements
- adding supplements, such as omega-3 and turmeric, to the diet
- exercising regularly
- getting the proper amount of sleep

To get started on a Mediterranean diet:

- Focus on fruits and vegetables and make these the staple of the diet.
- Eat beans, nuts, and whole grains daily.
- Season foods with herbs and spices instead of salt, fat, and sugar.
- Cook food with olive or avocado oil as standard, instead of butter.
- Focus on lean proteins, primarily fish, and eat less than 3 ounces red meat per week.
- Limit the intake of sweet and high-sugar foods and base most dessert intake around fruit

The recipes below are quite typical of something you might choose to prepare if you are on an anti-inflammatory diet. Add as many vegetable side dishes to accompany these meals as you like.

Spanish Style Chicken Stew

Ingredients

2 tablespoons olive oil
3 red onions, coarsely chopped
3 cloves garlic, coarsely
chopped 2 (400g) tins peeled
plum tomatoes 1 (400g) tin
chickpeas 475ml (16 fl oz)
water 2 teaspoons paprika 1
teaspoon crushed chilli flakes
Salt and pepper to taste 2
carrots, cut into chunks 1
potato, cubed 4 chicken
skinless thighs 115g (4 oz)
Spanish chorizo sausage,
casing removed and thickly
sliced

Method

Prep: 20min Cook:1hr30min Ready in:1hr50min Heat
olive oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir
in onions and garlic, cook until the onion has softened
and turned translucent. Pour in tomatoes, chickpeas and
water; season with paprika, chilli flakes, salt, and
pepper. Stir in carrots and potatoes, then place chicken
thighs skin-side up on top of the vegetables. Bring to a
boil over high heat, then reduce heat to medium, cover
and simmer until the chicken is tender, about 25
minutes. Preheat oven to 200 degrees C / gas mark 6.
Remove chicken from the stew and set aside. Stir in the
chorizo slices, then pour the stew into a baking dish.
Place the chicken thighs on top. Bake in preheated oven
until the stew has thickened., about 15 minutes.

Lemon Chicken

Ingredients Serves: 3 1
lemon 1 dessertspoon dried
oregano 3 cloves garlic,
minced 1 tablespoon olive oil
1/4 teaspoon salt 1/4
teaspoon ground black
pepper 6 chicken thighs,
skinless (2 each)

Method Prep:15min› Cook:50min› Ready in:1hr5min
Preheat oven to 220 C / Gas mark 7. In a 23x33cm (9x13
in) baking dish, grate the peel from 1/2 the lemon, squeeze
out the juice and add to peel with the oregano, garlic, oil,
salt and pepper. Stir until mixed. Coat chicken pieces with
the lemon mixture and arrange, bone side up, in the baking
dish. Cover dish and bake for 20 minutes. Turn and baste
chicken. Reduce heat to 200 C / Gas mark 6, and bake
uncovered, basting every 10 minutes, for about 30 more
minutes. Serve chicken with pan juices.

Bulgar Cracked Wheat Salad

Ingredients Serves: 4
350g fine bulgur cracked
wheat 2 tbsp tomato
puree 500ml vegetable
or chicken stock 1 small
bunch of spring onions 1
red pepper 1 green
pepper Salt and pepper
to taste

Method Prep:10min› Cook:5min Extra time:1hr soaking Ready
in:1hr15min Put the bulgur in a large bowl. Add the tomato
puree to the stock and heat to just below boiling point. Pour
over the bulgur and mix well, at this point you should also
season with a little salt and black pepper. Cover with cling film
and allow to stand for approximately 1 hour. Meanwhile, finely
slice the spring onions and dice the peppers. Once the bulgur
has expanded in size use a fork to fluff and loosen the bulgur
grains. Mix in the vegetables and you instantly have a salad or
accompaniment. Dress with olive oil and lemon juice, if you like.

Summer Pasta Bake

Ingredients Serves: 4 1 large
aubergine, cubed 3 medium
courgettes, cubed 3 red
onions, cut into thin wedges 6
cloves garlic, peeled but left
whole 1 red pepper, cubed 6
plum tomatoes, quartered 4
tablespoons olive oil sea salt
and freshly ground black
pepper to taste 1 teaspoon
dried oregano 100g penne
pasta 100g soft goat cheese,
crumbled (optional)

Method Prep:15min Cook:50min Extra time:30min resting
Ready in:1hr35min Sprinkle the aubergine cubes with a
little salt and leave in a sieve or colander for 30 minutes to
extract the dark, bitter juices. Preheat the oven to 190 C /
Gas 5. Combine all of the prepared veg and place in a
large baking dish. If the baking dish is overcrowded with
veg, split the veg between two dishes. Drizzle veg with
olive oil and sprinkle with salt, pepper and oregano. Toss
to thoroughly coat the veg. Bake in the oven till the
vegetables are very soft, about 45-55 minutes. Meanwhile,
during the last 10 minutes of cooking the veg, boil the
pasta in boiling salted water until al dente, according to
the timing on the packet. Drain. Remove the veg from the
oven. In the baking dish, toss the veg with the hot pasta. If
desired, add cheese and toss to combine. Season to taste
with salt and pepper and serve straightaway.

Summer Salmon Pasta Salad

Ingredients Serves: 8 500g dried
macaroni pasta 2 ripe tomatoes,
diced 4 spring onions, chopped 2
pickled cucumber spears, diced 1
(418g) tin salmon, drained 6
tablespoons of Quark (add a
teaspoon of chilli sauce for flavour)
salt and pepper to taste

Method Prep:10min Cook:10min Extra time:1hr
chilling Ready in:1hr20min Bring a large pot of
lightly salted water to the boil. Add pasta and cook
for 8 to 10 minutes or until al dente; drain. When
pasta has come to room temperature, combine it
with tomatoes, spring onions, cucumber spears,
salmon, quark, salt and pepper in a large bowl and
mix well. Chill before serving.

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