Battle Inflammation with Food

Although inflammation is the body’s helpful response to protect or recover from injury or illness, chronic inflammation is a lingering state caused by disease, stress, diet, smoking, etc. Managing chronic inflammation may reduce symptoms of pain and swelling, and potentially decrease the risk of developing other major diseases such as cancer, heart disease, arthritis, Alzheimer’s or depression.

Foods that can Reduce Inflammation

Researchers are still learning about the link between inflammation and diet, but a balanced, healthful diet may have an anti-inflammatory effect. Emphasize a daily variety of fruits and vegetables, which contain phytochemicals that can protect against inflammation. Add a few servings each week of healthy fats (omega-3’s), from sources such as salmon, walnuts or chia seeds. Be sure to choose whole grains more often. Brown rice is widely available, but you can also experiment with alternative whole grains such as quinoa, farro or bulgur for variety.

Alternatives for Foods that Promote Inflammation

On the other hand, certain foods can increase inflammation. Reduce or eliminate many saturated fats, trans fats and processed foods easily:

- Choose fish or vegetarian meals over red meat (try hummus instead of ham on a sandwich, or grilled fish on a whole wheat bun instead of a hamburger)
- Replace mayonnaise with sliced avocado
- Snack on air-popped popcorn instead of chips
- Try fruit or a small piece of dark chocolate for dessert
- Trade soda for unsweetened sparkling water
- Bake or grill foods instead of frying

Adapted from https://www.eatright.org/health/wellness/preventing-illness/what-is-an-anti-inflammatory-diet; https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/foods-that-fight-inflammation

Photos courtesy of pixabay.com; misc.