

THE NUTRITIONAL ADJUSTMENT MEETS JEDI HEALING

Strategies for Reducing Inflammation Using the Anti-Inflammatory Diet (AID) and
Low Energy Laser Therapy (LELT)

by Dr. Steve VeGodsky, Chiropractor

Are you confused about what to eat? Do you feel yourself welling up with doubt or anger over the plethora of pious platitudes heaped upon the latest "perfect plate" ... the ONE AND ONLY right way to eat?

There are two purposes for this article. One is to offer useful information for improving the quality of your life. The second is to serve as an invitation to my upcoming talk on Thursday evening, February 15th from 7:30-8:30 at my office, the Chiropractic Family Wellness Center, across from Albemarle High. This will be the first of a series of bimonthly holistic presentations comprising Steve's Health Awareness Resource Exchange (SHARE).

In the form of theory-backed diets, many beautiful brides (and great grooms) have already presented themselves at the altar of our well-being. A partial list includes Vegetarian, Vegan, Macrobiotic, Atkins, Low-Fat, Low-Sodium, The Zone, South Beach, Candida, Gluten-free, Blood Type, *ad nauseum*. Ardent followers of these paths espouse their loyalty because of the amazing results they've achieved. The next great candidate in our dietary dating game might just be the Anti-Inflammatory Diet (AID).

Let me say, at this point, that I don't believe any diet needs to be rigidly adhered to except in those situations where serious health consequences are at stake. We needn't be obsessive to the point where we create more stress than we relieve with our efforts. On the other hand, if you wish to improve and/or maintain your health, then following the main principals of a good nutritional plan (while allowing yourself an occasional cheat/treat) is essential. It is my opinion that the AID, which is based on sound biochemical research, may be your best option.

Research has proliferated over the last 20 years demonstrating the connections between diet, inflammation and disease. Inflammation is a stealthy stalker, one of the main contributing factors to a host of conditions and diseases including arthritis, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, sinusitis, allergies, acne, asthma, digestive problems, difficult menstruation, endometriosis, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, cancer, heart disease, osteoporosis, hypertension, depression and diabetes.

The main cause of inflammation is our diet. Other contributing factors include injury, lack of exercise, substance abuse, smoking and genetic predisposition. Inflammatory diseases usually develop slowly and with little warning, so whatever we can do towards reducing our intake of inflammatory foods will be preventative and of long term benefit.

Much of the information I'm sharing comes from the seminars and articles of Dr. David Seamon, a chiropractor and nutritionist who has spent many years studying the connection between inflammation, pain and diet. Dr. Seamon was initially led by Barry White, a renowned British neurologist (not the sexy singer). Dr. White explained that nociceptors are vital receptors found in every tissue of the human body that alert us to injury and help keep us alive by conveying pain. Numerous inflammatory biochemicals stimulate these sensitive nerve fibers, not only when we're injured, but also when we eat certain foods.

Prostaglandin E2 is a pro-inflammatory chemical formed when the body breaks down an omega-6 fatty acid found in all grains and many oils including corn, safflower, sunflower, cottonseed, peanut and soybean oil. Anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin and ibuprofen are effective in reducing pain because they inhibit the production of prostaglandin E2.

Grains are inflammatory for several other reasons. Most grains contain the notorious protein gluten. Celiac disease, a disabling digestive disorder, is caused by gluten found primarily in wheat, rye, barley, oats, couscous, spelt and kamut. Rice, millet, quinoa and corn are the main non-gluten grains, but they are still inflammatory.

Many people who don't have celiac disease are still gluten sensitive and suffer headaches, chronic fatigue, digestive disorders and anemia. Additionally, all grains and legumes -- beans, peas (including peanuts), lentils, and soy -- also contain sugar proteins known as lectins, which resist digestion and cause digestive system inflammation. Grains promote an acidic body pH, which also increases inflammation, as well as contain phytic acid, known to block the absorption of calcium, magnesium and zinc.

Our bodies are bio-engineered and genetically adapted to that part of our ancestral past which has dominated humankind's 2 million years on earth. It is only in the last 10,000 years, give or take a few months, that we have converted from hunter/gatherers to an agrarian society and introduced grains as a diet staple. The ratio of **inflammatory compared to anti-inflammatory** (omega 6 to omega 3) foods in the hunter/gatherer days was 1:1. The ratio in the typical high-carb American diet is 20:1!

The AID is really as simple as the hunter/gatherer diet, and even easier if we consider that we can find all our groceries at Whole Foods, where we don't have to watch for mastodons and saber tooth tigers. Here's what we should eat: FRUIT, VEGETABLES, ANIMAL PROTEIN and RAW NUTS – all anti-inflammatory. Animal protein, to the extent it is wild caught, grass fed or free range -- and not raised on grains - is anti-inflammatory. Both Whole Foods and Rebecca's carry all or mostly grass fed meat (lean cuts are preferable), as well as omega-3 enriched eggs, wild caught fish (salmon and mackerel are best) and free range poultry. Healthy anti-inflammatory oils include extra virgin olive, coconut and butter (organic is best). The inflammatory foods we need to avoid are seeds, grains, legumes and any unnatural or manufactured foods.

As a chiropractic physician, I have recommended this diet to people with fibromyalgia, irritable bowel, chronic fatigue, arthritis and chronic pain, often with great success. Supplementation to complement the diet includes a multivitamin, EPA/DHA (fish oil high in omega-3), CoQ10, magnesium and enzymes.

I have followed this diet myself for several months, even though I'm healthy as a horse. What I have noticed, besides craving rice and pasta (carboholic confessions), is a general increase in my energy level and an occasional fishy eructation (not recommended on a date). Dark chocolate is anti-inflammatory, so that helps.

Jedi healing, my pet name for low energy laser therapy (LELT), will be briefly mentioned in this article and extensively covered in my talk. LELT is a painless, non-thermal treatment often effective for small areas of inflammation such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow, shingles, acute strain/sprains, bursitis, tendonitis, inflamed discs and arthritis. LELT stimulates the body's tissues with non-thermal photons which penetrate deeply into the skin and beyond -- as much as 5 centimeters -- enhancing oxygen delivery to the cells, reducing inflammation by improving lymphatic drainage, improving circulation, decreasing pain and stimulating wound healing.

At my talk, anti-inflammatory refreshments will be served, handouts will be shared and questions will be welcomed.