

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

There are two purposes for this article. One is to offer useful information toward improving the quality of your life. The second is to serve as an introduction for 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 talk will be the first of six bimonthly holistic presentations comprising Steve's Health Awareness Resource Exchange (SHARE).

Are you confused about what to eat? Do you feel yourself welling up with doubt or anger over the plethora of pious platitudes praised upon the perfect plate... the ONE AND ONLY right way to eat? Beautiful brides (great grooms) have presented themselves to the alter of our dietary well-being before. A partial list includes Vegetarian, Vegan, Macrobiotic, Atkins, Low-Fat, Low-Sodium, The Zone, South Beach, Candida, Gluten-free, Blood type, etc, ad infinitum, ad naseum. Many ardent followers of these paths have espoused their loyalty because of the amazing results they've achieved. The next great darling in our dietary dating game might just be the Anti-Inflammatory Diet (AID). I don't believe that any diet needs to be rigidly adhered to except in those situations where serious health consequences can occur. We needn't be anal retentive to the point that we're creating more stress than we're relieving with our noble efforts. On the other hand, if you wish to improve and/or maintain your health, than 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 exploded 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 syndrome, sinusitis, allergies, acne, asthma, digestive conditions, dysmenorrhea, 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. Some of the other contributing factors include injury, lack of exercise, alcohol and drug 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.

Barry White, a renowned British doctor of neurology (not the sexy singer), helped to explain the connection between inflammation and pain generation. Nociceptors are vital receptors found in every single tissue of the human body, which alert us to injury by conveying pain. These necessary, but nasty receptors help keep us alive, but are also what cause us to feel pain in so many places. Numerous inflammatory biochemicals

stimulate these sensitive nerve fibers, not only when we're injured, but also when we eat certain foods. According to Dr. David Seamen, a chiropractor and nutritionist who has spent many years researching the connection between pain, inflammation and food, "Nothing influences our body chemistry more than diet."

Prostaglandin E2 is a pro-inflammatory chemical which is formed when the body breaks down linoleic acid, 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. Besides having a high concentration of omega 6 fatty acids, grains are also inflammatory for several other reasons. Most grains contain the notorious protein called 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, causing them to suffer from headaches, chronic fatigue, digestive disorders and anemia. Additionally, all grains and legumes (beans, peas including peanuts, lentils, soy) also contain sugar proteins known as lectins, which resist digestion and are known to cause digestive system inflammation. Grains promote an acidic body pH, which also increases inflammation. Grains also contain a substance called phytic acid, which is 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 our time on earth. By most accounts, homo-sapiens have inhabited our lovely planet for approximately 2,000,000 years. For 1,990,000 of those years, people have lived as hunter/gatherers. It is only in the last 10,000 years that we have converted to an agrarian society and introduced grains as a staple in our diet. The ratio of Omega 6 to Omega 3 fatty acids (inflammation causing to anti-inflammatory) 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, easier if we consider that we can find all our groceries at Whole Foods and we don't have to watch for mastodons and saber tooth tigers. Here's what we should eat: FRUIT, VEGETABLES, ANIMAL PROTEIN and NUTS. All fruits, vegetables and raw nuts are anti-inflammatory. Animal protein, to the extent that it is either wild caught, grass fed or free range, and it has not been raised on grains, is anti-inflammatory. Both Whole Food's 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. As previously stated, many oils are inflammatory. Healthy, anti-inflammatory oils include extra virgin olive, coconut and butter (organic is best). The foods that we need to avoid are seeds, grains, legumes and any unnatural or manufactured foods.

As a chiropractor, 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. In the interest of being able to speak from experience, I have followed this diet myself for several months, even though I'm healthy as a horse (a healthy one). What I have noticed, besides craving rice and pasta (grumblings of a groaning granarian, carboholic confessions), is a general increase in my energy level and an occasional fishy eructation (not recommended on a date). I feel better

in general, even though I have occasionally cheated. Dark chocolate is anti-inflammatory, so that helps. Three good books which give more AID information and recipes are: "The Paleodiet" by Dr. Loren Cordain, "Eat Fat, Lose Fat" and "Nourishing Traditions" both by Dr. Mary Enig and Sally Fallon.

Jedi healing, my pet name for low energy laser therapy (LLLT), will be only briefly mentioned in this article. LLLT, as well as supplementation for the AID will be more extensively covered in my talk. LLLT is a painless, non-thermal, treatment which is often effective for small areas of inflammation such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tennis elbow, shingles, acute strain/sprains, bursitis, tendonitis, inflamed discs and arthritis. LLLT stimulates the bodies tissues with non-thermal photons which penetrate deeply into the skin and beyond, as much as 5 centimeters, enhancing oxygen and energy to the cells, decreasing 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.