

Inflammation II

Last month, we discussed exactly what inflammation is and what disease processes it causes. This month we will delve into strategies to help manage inflammation! Many people in chronic pain reach for prescription medications to deal with their pain. Unfortunately, the overuse of narcotic painkillers has led to an epidemic of abuse in our country that has been dubbed the "Opioid Crisis". While effective, these painkillers are highly addictive and cause a host of different side effects. Over the counter medications have issues as well. Acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol, accounted for 1,500 deaths in the US from 2001 to 2010. NSAIDs like ibuprofen or naproxen, attack inflammation directly but can cause a host of side effects such as, increase chances of stroke, heart attack, stomach ulcer, leg swelling, hypertension, dizziness, etc.

But what other options are there? Diet is a great place to start lowering inflammation. Anti-inflammatory diets are becoming very popular, and Paleo, Mediterranean, Keto are all dietary plans that help limit inflammation. In addition, intermittent Fasting has shown lots of promise in the research to decrease inflammation. We do have a few general guidelines for improving your diet. First, focus on whole foods and avoid added sugar. Processed grains and dairy are very inflammatory, should be eaten sparingly. Limit excessive amounts of saturated fat, which is pro-inflammatory. Finally, remember that fruits and vegetables are your friends. They are packed with nutrients and are generally anti-inflammatory.

Supplementation can also help inflammation if diet isn't enough. Low Vitamin D levels have been associated with low back pain, metabolic syndrome and chronic inflammation, and supplementation is easy. Turmeric supplements are the newest "miracle cure", but the research backs it up. They offer similar pain relief to NSAIDs without the negatives. Finally, Omega-3 levels in the blood are associated with lower mortality and cardiovascular events! These are just a few things that can help combat the growing problem of chronic inflammation.

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