

## **NUTRITION TO HELP FIGHT INFLAMMATION**

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### **Get Your Fats Right**

Eating more fish, walnuts, and flaxseed and less processed food will all help prevent inflammation, says Professor Les Cleland, of the Rheumatology Department of the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

Along with other lifestyle factors, a major cause of chronic inflammation is thought to be the lopsided balance of fats in a typical 21st century Western diet: too many omega-6 fatty acids from sunflower, safflower, corn and soybean oils, for instance, and not enough omega-3s found in oily fish and some nuts.

Besides helping prevent or reduce chronic inflammation, omega-3 fats are heart friendly, raising levels of 'good' cholesterol and helping prevent clotting.

To improve your balance of fats, Cleland recommends at least two fish meals a week and using olive or canola oil. As for spreads, choose one based on olive or canola oil, and if you eat processed food, look for products made with olive or canola oil.

There's also evidence that trans fatty acids - already under fire for raising 'bad' LDL cholesterol and lowering 'good' HDL cholesterol - may be inflammatory too. Earlier this year, researchers at Harvard Medical School reported that women who ate the most trans fatty acids had the highest levels of inflammatory markers in their blood. These fats are found in some commercial baked foods like cakes, pastries, pies, and biscuits, as well as in some fast foods.

### **The Case for Fish Oil**

Besides good evidence that they reduce the risk of sudden death after a heart attack, Cleland also believes fish oil capsules help reduce chronic inflammation. Animal studies show fish oil suppresses inflammation, and there's strong evidence that it improves symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, an inflammatory disease. It's not clear what the preventive dose might be.

"We know that if you have established disease like rheumatoid arthritis, the dose is nine fish oil capsules a day. It may be that you would prevent inflammation with a lower dose, but we don't know."

### **Oats and Spices**

Some research also suggests that foods with a high glycaemic index, such as white bread and other refined carbohydrates like some cereals, biscuits and cakes, may promote inflammation.

Meanwhile, Chinese medicine uses turmeric as an anti-inflammatory, and laboratory studies suggests turmeric's active ingredient, an antioxidant called curcumin, may have anti-inflammatory effects. It is good in risottos, rice salads and soups as well as curries. Research suggests that ginger also works as an anti-inflammatory