



Wellness Update July 2018 *by Susan Hanly - Naturopath*

Inflammation – the fire within!!

There is now heaps of information coming out about inflammation and the damage it causes. Just browse the internet and you'll see all manner of articles on the subject. But what is the real problem with inflammation and what can we do about it? Basically inflammation will cause damage wherever it is found.

Diet can have an influence on inflammation. What we eat will have a direct effect on the make-up and population of microbes and bacteria in your gut. A poor diet plus or minus antibiotic use can weaken the gut lining and its protective mucous layer allowing it to become "leaky". This allows bacteria and other fragments to leak through the gut lining into your blood where they stir up the immune cells to fight the invaders. This will result in inflammation.

High sugar and fatty foods tend to be inflammatory. Instead, a diet high in fresh fruit and vegetables, nuts, fish, whole grains and olive oil helps reduce inflammation. This is basically the Mediterranean diet. Studies have shown the Mediterranean diet to reduce inflammatory markers – hs-CRP (high sensitivity C-reactive protein). A high fibre diet is effective at reducing hs-CRP as it encourages a tightly sealed gut lining. There is evidence to show some foods can increase inflammation such as charred meat, saturated fat and sugar. The most proven dietary intervention is that weight loss reduces inflammation. Fatty tissue acts like infected tissue, recruiting immune cells and raising the levels of circulating inflammatory markers.

Inflammation can increase the risk of cancer. Cosmos magazine points out 'that chronic inflammation causes cells to produce reactive oxygen species (ROS). These corrosive chemicals kill invaders that have been gobbled up by immune cells. But the ROS also wreak damage on the DNA of host cells that leads to mutations and cancer.

When it comes to Alzheimer's Disease, inflammation is now a popular causative factor. Is it the amyloid plaques in the brain causing the inflammation or is the inflammation causing the amyloid plaques? The research continues.

When it comes to pinpointing the role of inflammation in common diseases we still have a way to go. One thing they have worked out is that age ramps up inflammation in the body (oh great!). Some cells for whatever reason go into a state of arrest: senescent cells. These cells no longer divide but belch out inflammatory chemicals – cytokines. These cytokines attract troops that spray friendly fire on surrounding tissue. Researchers are working on ways to prune away these senescent cells and therefore slow the ageing process. Don't hold your breath, this is a fair way off yet.

In the mean time we need to do all we can to reduce inflammation for as long as we can. This means eating a clean healthy diet of fruit, vegies, fish and nuts. Exercise and plenty of filtered water as well. Antioxidant supplements can also help reduce inflammation and lessen the negative effects.

We need to douse the inflammatory flames!

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