Anti-Inflammatory Foods

What causes inflammation:

It is the body's response to injury, illness (like a virus), environmental toxins, aging, chronic stress, and an unhealthy eating pattern.

Types of Inflammation:

Acute (short-term) inflammation is an essential component of the healing process. This type of inflammation is standard and protects your health.

Chronic (long-term) inflammation can damage organs, like your heart and brain, and lead to disease. Some diseases that are associated with unhealthy inflammation include, Alzheimer's disease, Cancer, Chronic Pain, Depression, Heart Disease, Type 2 Diabetes, and Obesity.

Diet and lifestyle strategies to decrease inflammation:

Follow a healthy eating pattern to help fight inflammation.

- Choose plant-based proteins.
- Select high-fiber foods.
- Aim for 5 cups of fruits and vegetables a day.
- Flavor food with herbs and spices
- Drink water. Avoid sugar-sweetened beverages and excess alcohol.
- Prepare food by baking, steaming, or fast stir-frying instead of deep frying.

Maintain a healthy weight. If you are overweight, aim for a 5-10% weight loss.

Make time for movement. Ask about VA resources such as Ompractice, GeroFit, on-site gym, and/or aqua therapy. These vary by location.

Manage stress. Several tools can be helpful, including breathing exercises and meditation. Ask your VA provider about the VA Manage Stress Workbook and apps that can provide support.

Food list

Choose:
Fruits and Vegetables—Aim for 5 cups a day and a variety of colors. • Red: Berries, cherries, and peppers • Yellow: Sweet potato, pineapple, yellow pepper, squash and peaches • Green: Dark leafy greens, broccoli, cabbage, green beans, and Brussel sprouts • Blue/Purple/Black: blackberries, grapes, eggplant, olives, plums, purple cabbage
Whole grains, oatmeal, bran cereal, brown rice, popcorn, potato skins
Plant-based proteins such as beans, whole grains (such as quinoa and farro), nuts, and seeds Wild-caught fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, and mackerel Grass-fed and wild meat and fish
Olive, canola, peanut, safflower, and sesame oils; avocados
Herbs and spices-Paprika, rosemary, ginger, turmeric, sage, cumin, cloves, Jamaican allspice, cinnamon, marjoram, tarragon, green and black tea
Dark chocolate (70% of cocoa or more)

Limit:
Processed meat, such as deli meats, hotdogs, bacon, and sausage Grain-fed beef Meat high in saturated fat, such as lamb and pork (belly, shoulder, rib cuts), fatty beef (rib-eye and skirt), and chicken with skin Dairy products (milk, cream, cheese, butter)
Trans fats found in margarine, microwave popcorn, refrigerated biscuits, and dough, and nondairy coffee creamers

Baked goods (cake, pie crust, frozen pizza, cookies) Deep-fried items such as French fries, fried chicken and donuts
Foods and beverages high in added sugar, such as candy, jelly, syrup, fruit juice, bottled or canned tea drinks, soda, and sports drinks