

Inflammation – What to do about it?

Whether you just sprained your ankle playing softball or you lifted something one too many times, to decrease the inflammation and associated pain, always use ice. If you don't have a traditional icepack, improvise and use a bag of frozen veggies or berries. Place a thin towel around the plastic so that it is not right up against your skin and have it in place for 10 – 15 minutes. Take it off and re-apply as often as every 30 minutes if you need to. (After 1-2 days, you can switch to using heat or alternating between hot and cold.)

Additional approaches for taking care of long term inflammation include some nutritional recommendations: increase your intake of Omega-3 fats by eating salmon or tuna, walnuts, flax seeds, and wheat germ. Use extra virgin olive oil, rosemary, turmeric, ginger, and curry in your cooking. Increase your intake of fruits and vegetables such as red onions, tomatoes, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, garlic, dark leafy greens, red grapes, berries, apples, pomegranates, and cherries. The Omega-3 fatty acids that are often talked about are Alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), and Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA).

If you would like to take an Omega-3 supplement, be sure that it is “pharmaceutical grade” or that the label states it is “molecularly distilled”. Either of these two phrases means that the supplement is a high quality form of Omega-3's.

Things to avoid include Omega-6 oils such as corn, peanut, soybean, or sunflower oil. In general, we get plenty of Omega-6 fats (which are pro-inflammatory) in our diet and not enough Omega-3 fats. Be sure to check your margarine, mayonnaise and other processed foods for the Omega-6 fats. Avoid red meat, dairy products, and poultry skin as these have arachidonic acid which your body utilizes to increase inflammation and pain. The other common Omega-6 fatty acids are Linoleic acid and Gamma-linolenic acid. Lastly, avoid trans fats and oxidized fats as these are also inflammatory to your body.

If you have questions regarding the supplements or other ideas for decreasing inflammation, please talk to Drs. Meghan or Gerrit.