

A GUIDE FROM
Mark Hyman MD

THE INFLAMMATION FIX

5

Steps to
Feel Better Fast

If you've ever cut your hand or rolled your ankle, you've experienced inflammation firsthand.

The injured spot hurts. It turns red and becomes warm to the touch. It might swell. Then, as your body heals, the soreness and swelling gradually subside.

This is the inflammatory process.

But that same process can happen deep inside your body too, in ways you can't see. And when it doesn't shut off, chronic inflammation can leave you bloated, foggy, tired, and achy—and increase your risk of major health issues over time.

Luckily, you can cool this inflammatory fire.

These five simple nutrition changes work with your body's natural healing process so you can start feeling better fast.

But first, let's cover the basics.

Inflammation 101

Inflammation is your body's response to injury or threat—and it's meant to help you heal.

Your immune system sends out chemical messengers (like prostaglandins, histamine, bradykinin, and cytokines) that:

- **Increase blood flow**, which brings more immune cells to the area. This causes the redness and warmth you can see and feel.
- **Make blood vessels more permeable**, allowing helpful cells and fluids to move into the tissue. This leads to swelling, which cushions the area and helps with repair.
- **Sensitize nearby nerve endings**, which makes the area more sensitive to pain.

This is your body's way of telling you to protect the area while it heals.

This is a healthy response in the short term... even if it doesn't feel all that great.

But in the long term, ongoing or repeated "**insults**" (anything that irritates or stresses your body enough to spark an immune response, like a poor diet) can lead to low-grade chronic inflammation—even when there's no injury to fix.

And if those insults keep coming, your immune system never really gets to stand down.

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Chronic inflammation can lead to issues in:



Your **brain**, where it can interfere with hunger cues, focus, mood, and energy. It may contribute to brain fog, changes in appetite, fatigue, anxiety, and even depression. (Learn more here: [The Most Dangerous Foods for Your Brain.](#))



The lining of your **blood vessels**. This can impair your circulation and trigger reactions that affect everything from blood pressure to insulin sensitivity to headaches.



Your **stomach and esophagus**, where it irritates the tissue and contributes to heartburn and reflux—especially when combined with other factors like poor diet, stress, or gut imbalances.



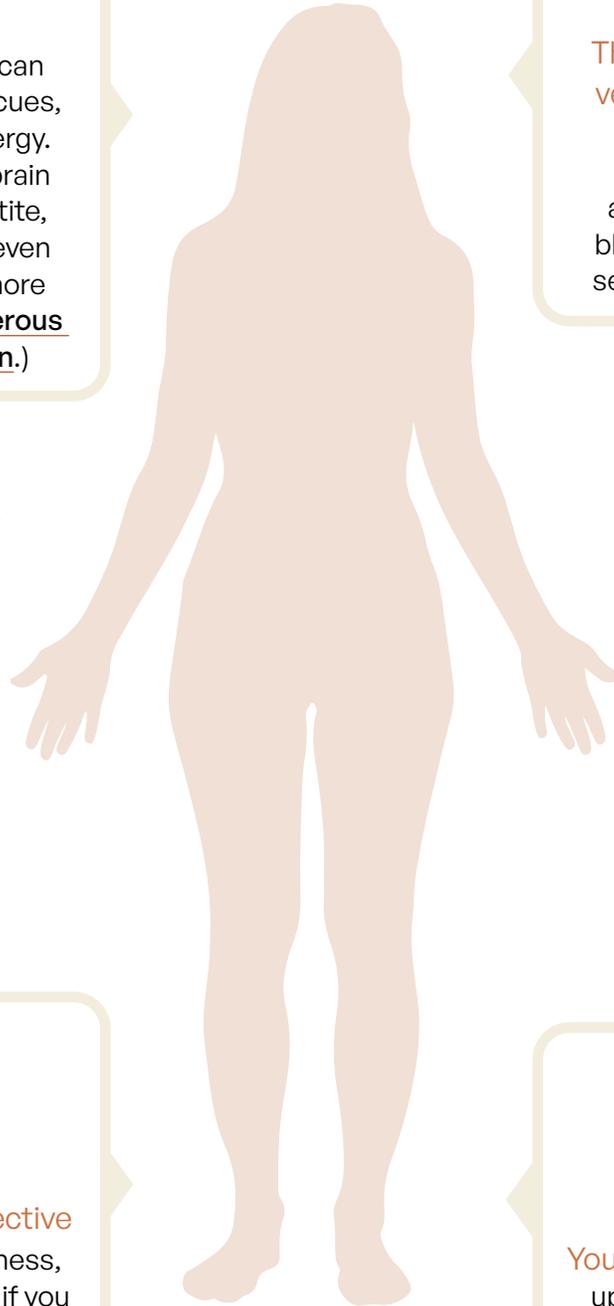
Your **digestive tract**, where it can weaken your gut lining and allow harmful substances to leak into your bloodstream. This triggers an immune response that can lead to bloating, food sensitivities, and even systemic inflammation that affects other areas of your body.



Your **joints and connective tissues**, causing stiffness, swelling, or pain—even if you don't have an injury.



Your **skin**, where it can show up as puffiness, redness, rashes, or blotchiness.



Each of these is an issue on its own. But inflammation frequently affects multiple systems at once, which is why you'll often hear the term **whole-body inflammation**.

That can add up, resulting in nagging symptoms you don't want and a higher risk for chronic diseases.

Diet and Chronic Inflammation

One of the biggest drivers of chronic inflammation? [The Standard American Diet](#).

The Standard American Diet (often called the SAD diet, and for good reason) is high in refined grains, added sugars, unhealthy fats, salt, and, ultimately, calories—most often delivered in the form of [ultra-processed foods](#).

Your body can handle a lot. But when you consume foods like these in excess, it can push your immune system into overdrive and ramp up whole-body inflammation.

The weight gain that often comes with over-eating these foods only adds to the problem. Fat tissue—particularly around the belly—can produce its own inflammatory signals, creating a cycle that's hard to break.

Inflammatory foods include:

- **Sugar and starch:** When you eat sugar or fast-digesting starches, your blood sugar rises sharply. Consistently eating these foods in excess leads to repeated spikes in blood sugar and insulin. Over time, this can contribute to inflammation—especially in people who already have insulin resistance or are on the path to developing it. Chronically high blood sugar may also damage tissues, like the lining of your blood vessels, which your immune system treats as an injury. (You can learn more about insulin resistance in [this video from The Dr. Hyman Show](#).)

- **Alcohol:** For some people, even moderate amounts can irritate your gut lining, disrupt your microbiome, and increase intestinal permeability—allowing toxins, bacteria, and partially digested food particles to slip into your bloodstream. Your immune system sees these as threats and responds with inflammation. (You can read more in [The Truth About Drinking](#).)

- **Trans fats:** These industrial fats interfere with normal cell function and are known to activate inflammatory pathways. While banned from many products, they're still found in some fried foods, baked goods, and processed snacks.

- **Excess omega-6 fats:** Omega-6 fats—found in seed oils like soybean, corn, safflower, and sunflower—are essential in small amounts. But thanks to ultra-processed foods, most people's diets contain far too many of them and not enough omega-3s (from sources like wild salmon, sardines, flax, or walnuts) to provide balance. That excess tilts the body toward a more inflammatory state. (You can dive deeper in [Are Seed Oils Bad for You?](#))

Here's the thing: Your ancestors wouldn't have eaten any of these ingredients in excess. Some of them didn't even exist a decade ago.

Today, they're not only readily available, but food manufacturers combine these ingredients to engineer ultra-processed foods that are nearly impossible to stop eating.



Most people don't eat ultra-processed foods occasionally. They eat them often and in large amounts—**driving both weight gain and chronic inflammation.**

Other Inflammatory Triggers

Diet plays a huge role in how inflamed you are, but it's not the only trigger.

Other drivers of inflammation can include:

- **Lack of exercise**
- **Stress**
- **Hidden or chronic infections with viruses, bacteria, yeasts, or parasites**
- **Hidden allergens (dietary, environmental)**
- **Toxins (mercury, pesticides)**
- **Mold toxins and allergens**

Your nutrition is your foundation, but an anti-inflammatory lifestyle that focuses on whole-body well-being will set you up for optimal health.

5 Steps to Calm Inflammation Naturally

If you're struggling with chronic inflammation—and feeling crummy, exhausted, and symptomatic—you don't have to live like this.

It's time to break the cycle so you can **feel better, function better, and live better.**

Let's walk through five steps to kickstart healing and calm chronic inflammation by simply changing what you put on your plate.

(Spoiler alert: Most people see significant improvements in a matter of days by following these core practices. And this is just a small taste of the type of guidance you'll get in my **10-Day Detox**, where you can reset your biological systems with real food and reclaim your health.)

Step #1: Clear Out the Big Offenders

Step #2: Build Your Plate Around Color

Step #3: Upgrade Your Fats

Step #4: Spice It Up

Step #5: Hydrate Like You Mean It

STEP #1

Clear Out the Big Offenders

Avoid ultra-processed foods, which are high in added sugars, refined grains, unhealthy fats and seed oils, sodium, gums, artificial flavors, dyes, and preservatives—and low in essential nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

These inflammatory Frankenfoods are designed to be hyper-palatable and easy to overeat, which takes a toll on both your blood sugar regulation and gut health (and potentially your waistline). All of this drives silent inflammation.

Gummy bears, frozen pizza, snack cakes, sugary cereal, soda, white bread, french fries, vanilla lattes, instant noodles, hot dogs, frozen fish sticks, microwave popcorn, jello, energy drinks, potato chips... toss 'em out. (Learn more: [How to Clean Out Your Kitchen](#).)

For bonus points, minimize or avoid alcohol too.

When you ditch these foods, you give your body a chance to stand down and start healing.

This is a foundational step in the healing process—and it can have a profound impact on your overall health and longevity.

QUICK TIP

Start with Food Swaps

For example:

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|----------------------|------------------------------|
| ✘ Soda | ✔ Sparkling Water with Lemon |
| ✘ White Bread or Bun | ✔ Lettuce Wrap |
| ✘ French Fries | ✔ Roasted Sweet Potatoes |
| ✘ Candy Bar | ✔ Square of Dark Chocolate |
| ✘ Frozen Dinner | ✔ Homemade Soup |
| ✘ Caramel Macchiato | ✔ Black or Green Tea |



STEP #2

Build Your Plate Around Color

At every meal, fill at least half your plate with colorful, non-starchy vegetables—and enjoy sweet fruits and starchy veggies in moderation.

Colorful plants are loaded with...

- **Vitamins and minerals:** essential micronutrients that your body needs in small amounts to function properly
- **Phytonutrients:** compounds that plants produce to help themselves survive—and that provide bonus health benefits for your body
- **Antioxidants:** substances that protect your cells from damage caused by unstable molecules called free radicals

... all of which help neutralize inflammation and support repair.

The more colors and varieties of plants you eat, the more you're giving your body the tools it needs to thrive.

Aim to get some of each color every day—and ideally, try to eat 30 different plant foods each week. Your body will thank you!



QUICK TIP

Shop Smart to Make It Easy to Throw Together Colorful Meals

For example:

- **Buy** pre-washed salad greens.
- **Opt** for frozen organic mixed veggies and keep them handy as a last-minute side or stir-fry addition.
- **Grab** pre-cut carrots, celery, broccoli, or bell peppers to snack on.
- **Blend** spinach, frozen cauliflower, or blueberries into your protein shake.



Eat Across the Color Spectrum

Red

- Apples
- Tomatoes
- Watermelon
- Strawberries
- Cherries
- Red peppers
- Beets

Orange

- Carrots
- Sweet potatoes
- Pumpkin
- Mangoes
- Oranges
- Apricots
- Cantaloupe
- Papaya
- Turmeric

Yellow

- Banana
- Yellow peppers
- Squash
- Pineapple
- Lemons
- Ginger root
- Summer squash

Green

- Broccoli
- Kale
- Spinach
- Brussels sprouts
- Avocados
- Kiwi
- Limes
- Zucchini
- Asparagus
- Bok choy
- Green peas
- Green tea

BLUE/PURPLE/BLACK

- Blueberries
- Blackberries
- Boysenberries
- Eggplant
- Plums
- Purple cabbage
- Grapes
- Purple carrots
- Figs
- Prunes

WHITE/TAN/BROWN

- Garlic
- Onions
- Mushrooms
- Cauliflower
- Oats
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Cocoa
- Dates
- Ginger
- Tahini

STEP #3

Upgrade Your Fats

Replace industrial fats (canola oil, soybean oil, margarine) with anti-inflammatory options like extra-virgin olive oil, avocado, nuts, and wild-caught salmon.

Swapping out ultra-processed foods is already a huge step in minimizing those less-healthy fats—but don't forget to add enough of the healthy ones back in.

Omega-3 fatty acids in particular are called **essential fats** because your body can't make them on its own—you have to get them from food or supplements—and they're critical to your health and well-being. The two most important types are EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), which are found in fatty fish like salmon, sardines, and mackerel.

These healthy fats help calm inflammation, support your brain health, and keep your blood sugar stable. Aim for at least one serving of healthy fat at every meal.

That said, the vast majority of us are deficient in omega-3 fatty acids. So, in addition to seeking out healthy dietary sources, consider adding a high-quality fish oil supplement such as [**Omega-3 Rejuvenate from Big Bold Health**](#).

(If you're interested in optimizing nutrient intake overall, check out my [**Foundational Supplement Stack**](#).)



QUICK TIP

Start with Simple Swaps and Easy Additions

For example:

- **Instead** of bottled dressings with inflammatory oils, make an olive oil + lemon dressing to drizzle over meals.
- **Instead** of dipping chips in queso, try dipping veggies in guacamole.
- **Add** avocado, walnuts, a splash of olive oil, or even some canned wild-caught anchovies or salmon to your salad.
- **Add** an omega-3 (DHA+EPA) supplement daily.

STEP #4

Spice It Up

Add herbs and spices to every meal for flavor and for their powerful anti-inflammatory benefits.

Many herbs and spices act like medicine in your kitchen. Sage, turmeric, ginger, garlic, cinnamon, rosemary, and oregano are packed with compounds that can calm inflammation, support your immune system, and even help balance blood sugar.

Sprinkle cinnamon on your morning oatmeal, add turmeric and black pepper to soups or stir-fries, or blend fresh ginger into a smoothie. Small amounts, used daily, add up to a big impact on your health.

Think of spices as more than seasoning—they're healing tools you can use every single day.



QUICK TIP

Make It Effortless

For example:

- **Keep** a small spice rack or basket near your stove so they're always in sight.
- **Buy** pre-blended organic spice mixes, like curry or Italian seasoning, to add flavor fast. (Just be sure to check the label and avoid added sugars, dyes, and any artificial flavors or stabilizers.)
- **Freeze** peeled chunks of ginger or garlic so they're always ready to grate or chop.
- **Stir** fresh herbs like basil, parsley, or cilantro into soups, eggs, or salads for an instant nutrient boost.

STEP #5

Hydrate Like You Mean It

Drink filtered water throughout the day to keep your body functioning at its best.

Even mild dehydration can increase stress in your body and make it harder to flush out toxins, both of which can worsen inflammation. While water won't erase all the other drivers of chronic inflammation, staying hydrated will help clear out waste, deliver nutrients to your cells, cushion your joints, and keep your energy levels steady.

Most people need about half their body weight in ounces of water per day (for example, a 150-pound person would aim for about 75 ounces). If plain water feels boring, you can infuse it with lemon, cucumber, or berries for natural flavor. Herbal teas also count toward your daily hydration.

Think of hydration as one of the simplest, fastest ways to help your body feel better.



QUICK TIP

Make Water Your Easiest Option

For example:

- **Keep** a refillable water bottle within arm's reach at all times.
- **Start** your day with a full glass of water before coffee or tea. Keep a water glass by your toothbrush as a visual reminder! (Learn more about [how to get cleaner water from the tap.](#))
- **Set** a reminder on your phone to take hydration breaks.
- **Flavor** your water with fresh fruit or herbs (like mint) to keep it interesting.

Going Beyond Nutrition: 2 Bonus Practices for Whole-Body Wellness

While food is one of the most powerful tools for fighting inflammation, it's not the whole picture. How you rest and move each day also plays a huge role.

These bonus steps are simple ways to give your body some extra support.

BONUS PRACTICE: Prioritize Rest and Reset

Aim for 7–9 hours of restful sleep each night.

Your body does its best healing when you're resting. Quality sleep helps regulate inflammation, balance hormones, and repair tissues.

Try setting a consistent bedtime, or use a 5-minute wind-down routine (stretching, journaling, or deep breathing) to signal to your body that it's time to rest. (Check out [3 Easy Sleep Experiments That Actually Work](#) for more tips.)

To take it one step further, consider short “reset” breaks throughout the day to calm stress and recharge.

Block off your calendar for 10 minutes three times a day, or set recurring reminders on your phone to intentionally take a few minutes to pause, tune in to your body, and relax. Take some deep breaths, try a meditation, or simply practice being mindful in the moment.

BONUS PRACTICE: Keep Your Body Moving

Aim to get consistent physical activity that includes both strength and cardio exercise (and throw in some mobility work for good measure). Importantly, though, all movement counts!

Movement is one of the most powerful natural anti-inflammatories. Regular activity boosts circulation, reduces stiffness, and helps lower chronic inflammation over time.

For example, you could include some (or all) of the following:

- Resistance training with weights or bands
- Powerlifting
- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Pilates
- Walking in nature
- Outdoor sports (like tennis, pickleball, hiking, or soccer—so many options!)
- Group fitness classes (like aerial fitness or Zumba)
- Moderate-intensity cardio (like brisk walking, cycling, or swimming)
- High-intensity interval training (short bursts of intense exercise followed by rest or low-intensity periods)
- Calisthenics

If you're just starting out, shoot to add just 10 more minutes of movement you like and can tolerate 3–4 days per week. Then, work your way up over time.

This is all about getting in the habit of moving your body. And luckily, there are tons of options out there. Get creative and find what you enjoy!

What's Next

What you put in your body matters. A lot.

You might not think you can feel inflammation—until you start to lower it. Then you realize: You never knew how bad you felt until you started to feel better.

If these simple changes can help you feel better in just a few days, imagine what 10 days of a full anti-inflammatory reset can do.

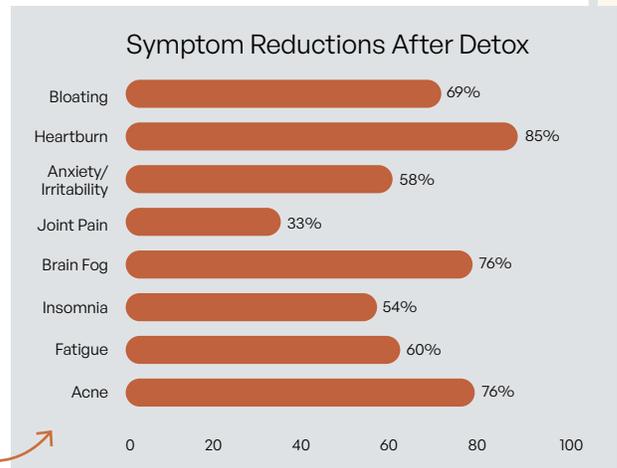
That's exactly what the **10-Day Detox** is designed for. I use it with all my patients to dramatically lower inflammation and help them start feeling better than they have in years.

What can REALLY happen in just 10 days?

Out of 250 recent participants who logged their weight and completed both the before and after Medical Symptom Questionnaire, the average weight loss was 7 pounds.

While individual results vary, more than half the group lost 5 pounds or more.*

The 10-Day Detox is about more than just weight loss, though—it's about how you feel. Participants reported dramatic improvements in several frustrating symptoms. Here's a look at the average reduction across the group.



* Participants with higher starting body weight often see a larger initial reduction in weight.

Participants saw a 60% reduction in chronic symptoms. That means:

- Less bloating
- Clearer thinking
- Better energy
- Less joint pain
- Improved sleep

This is what happens when you remove the fuel for inflammation and give your body what it actually needs to heal.

Ready to reset?



[Explore the 10-Day Detox](#)