

What is Chronic Inflammation?



According to Harvard Medical School, “Three out of every five people around the world die from a disease linked to inflammation.”

Acute versus Chronic Inflammation

There are two types of inflammation: acute (short term) and chronic (long term).

Acute inflammation is a normal part of your body’s immune response. When you cut yourself or catch cold, your immune system responds by deploying specialized pro-inflammatory cells to the site of injury or infection. The area becomes warm, red, swollen and painful as your body performs an elegant dance to restore homeostasis. Homeostasis, which the human body constantly seeks, is the stable internal state in which the body functions more or less properly.

Chronic inflammation occurs when the normal immune response is out of whack. This happens when your immune response is too strong, lasts too long after an infection goes away, misfires because of an autoimmune disease, or is constantly triggered by lifestyle or environmental factors. Chronic inflammation lasts weeks, months or even

years. The "always on" response by your immune system begins to destroy healthy cells and tissues, leading to poorer health outcomes and potentially life-threatening disease or disorder.

Although many people think of acute inflammation as "good" and chronic inflammation as "bad," I prefer to think about any inflammation as information. In either case your body invites you to slow down and take care of your health. In the case of chronic inflammation, however, your body is pressing for more urgent response.

What Causes Inflammation

Many things cause inflammation: diet, pathogens (viruses, bacteria, fungi), injury, environmental toxins (insecticides, pesticides, heavy metals), stress, lack of sleep, inactivity, certain medications (like birth control), radiation, electromagnetic waves, and lifestyle choices like smoking and alcohol.

Symptoms of Chronic Inflammation

Symptoms of chronic inflammation are less obvious than acute inflammation and take longer to develop. You might think of this process as a slow burn. Because symptoms are subtler, they may be misdiagnosed or dismissed as stress or hypochondria by well-intended medical professionals. The symptoms of chronic inflammation include the following:

- Headaches or migraines
- Fatigue and lethargy (especially after eating)
- Depression, anxiety
- Recurrent mouth ulcers
- Muscle aches and joint pain
- Stomach issues, including acid reflux, vomiting, nausea, stomach and duodenal ulcers
- Gastrointestinal issues, including flatulence, bloating, constipation, pain
- Edema (water retention)
- Mental foginess

Do any of these sound familiar?

Results of Chronic Inflammation

Left unchecked, chronic inflammation can have dire consequences. Medical research confirms that chronic inflammation is at the root of many diseases and disorders, including the following :

- ☑ Autoimmune diseases: rheumatoid arthritis, chronic fatigue syndrome, Lupus
- ☑ Cardiovascular diseases: high blood pressure, heart disease, atherosclerosis
- ☑ Gastrointestinal disorders: Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), Chron's disease, Leaky Gut Syndrome
- ☑ Lung diseases: allergies, asthma, COPD
- ☑ Mental illnesses: depression, anxiety,
- ☑ Metabolic diseases: obesity, metabolic syndrome and Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes
- ☑ Neurodegenerative diseases: Parkinson's, Alzheimers
- ☑ Some types of cancer: like colon and lung cancer
- ☑ Skin disorders: eczema, psoriasis, acne

*This is a rudimentary overview of chronic inflammation. For a more in-depth discussion, I suggest the booklet *Fighting Inflammation* by Harvard Medical School —> [Here](#).*