

# Foods can help fight inflammation

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Inflammation is the body's normal response to injury. While it may be a natural defense system, it can lead to disease development if it becomes chronic. A University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) expert says one way to fight inflammation is with food.

"The [inflammation](#) process has one goal: to respond immediately to detect and destroy the [toxic material](#) in damaged tissues before it can spread throughout the body," explained Lauren Whitt, Ph.D., UAB Employee Wellness director and adjunct professor of [personal health](#).

"The trouble with inflammation occurs when the defense system gets out-of-control and begins to destroy healthy tissue, causing more damage than the original issue."

[Obesity](#) has even been found to cause inflammation, and it can lead to

the development of cardiovascular and [metabolic disease](#), according to the National Council on Strength & Fitness. But weight loss is related to reduction of inflammation, and Whitt says the right anti-inflammatory foods are the answer.

"I encourage people to focus on eating whole foods and foods that are high in fiber," Whitt said.

Anti-inflammatory foods to try:

- **Citrus fruits** – Vitamin C and Vitamin E are essential antioxidants
- **Dark, leafy greens** – High in Vitamin K
- **Tomatoes** – The fruit's red pigment, lycopene, is a potent antioxidant
- **Wild-caught salmon** – Contains a rich concentration of omega-3 fatty acids

Whitt added that eating anti-inflammatory foods should not be viewed as daunting.

"Eating to minimize inflammation doesn't have to be an overwhelming task," she said. "Take baby steps by incorporating leafy greens into a salad at lunch, or add a piece of whole fruit to your breakfast."

In addition, Whitt said to consume more foods straight from the farm, as well as fewer processed and fried foods. Doing so may reduce the need for some medications.

"Americans are constantly on the lookout for a quick-fix, so when our immune systems kick into overdrive, we would generally prefer to pop a pill and keep moving," Whitt said. "But if we focus on our diets, we can

alleviate the need for the anti-inflammatory medications in many cases."

Provided by University of Alabama at Birmingham

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