Inflammation Part 1: Use a Natural Band-Aid

(Next article Inflammation Part 2: Treat the Cause)

In terms of your health, inflammation is the root of all evil. Inflammation is linked to heart disease, cancer, autoimmune disease, depression, and eczema, just to name a few. It also causes us PAIN!

Not all inflammation is bad. In the case of an injury, viral/bacterial invasion, or exposure to a toxic chemical, inflammation is part of a healthy, healing immunological response. Chronic inflammation, however, occurs when the body is overwhelmed or the immune system fails to turn off its inflammatory response at the proper time. Most people who are chronically inflamed don't realize it, but if you’re reaching for the Advil every night, you are one of them.

Here in exercise-obsessed Jackson, it’s common to think that one’s activity level is the reason for routine inflammation. If that is the case, here are some tools found in foods and supplements:

*Curcumin*: Found in turmeric, it not only has anti-inflammatory properties, but is also cancer fighting, an antibiotic and an antioxidant. Its anti-inflammatory mechanism is its ability to inhibit the COX-2 and 5-lipoxygenase enzymes, prime causes of inflammation. Chinese and Aurvedic medical practitioners have been using turmeric alone or in combination for nearly 4000 years.

*Enzymes*: Unlike enzymes that help you digest food, formulas like proteolytic enzymes enter the blood stream and break down the proteins that contribute to inflammation. In supplement form, they are taken on an empty stomach, but they can also be found in foods like pineapple, papaya and ginger.

*Ginger*: Derived from the same family as turmeric, ginger is another COX-1, COX2 and 5-lipoxygenase inhibitor. It relieves muscle and joint pain, menstrual cramps and migraines and is delicious in cooking. Try minced ginger in hot water with two tablespoons of honey and lemon juice, for a great-tasting inflammation fighter.

*Boswellia*: Also known as Frankincense. Contained in supplements, its active constituent, Boswellic acid, has been shown to decrease osteoarthritic pain in only seven days and slow the progression of cartilage damage in three months. Its mechanism of action is also on the 5-lipoxygenase pathway.

*Fish oil*: One of the easiest and most beneficial ways to decrease inflammation is by changing your fat ratio by increasing your consumption of Omega 3 oils and decreasing saturated fats. Good quality fish oil is available at every supermarket in pill and liquid form. However, most people do not take enough to get the anti-inflammatory response. Upwards of 3 grams is necessary to have a therapeutic effect.

Some of nutrients listed above will interact with medications or are contraindicated with certain diseases. Check in with your doctor if you are unsure about using a supplement.

These are just a few substances that can treat your inflammation. Instead of grabbing for the ibuprofen, try a natural less damaging approach.