

# Treating Inflammation

Inflammation can be a good thing. According to the Cleveland Clinic, inflammation is the immune system's response to injury, infection, and invaders (like germs). When responding to an injury or infection, inflammation is the body's natural response, and it aids in healing.



Inflammation in action is seeing someone with a fever. That fever, during the flu or other infection is the body's way of fighting the illness. When the inflammation is a response to illness, it is considered acute and will go away when the illness or injury does

Problems arise when inflammation is not involved in healing. When the inflammation becomes chronic, it stays even when there is no illness or injury. Rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis are prime examples. Both these diseases occur when the immune system turns against the body. Arthritis occurs when the immune system attacks the joints. MS occurs when the immune system targets the central nervous system.

When people suffer from inflammation, they often experience fatigue, insomnia, mood disorders, rashes, aching joints and muscles, weight gain, chest pain, headaches, diarrhea or constipation. They may experience redness, swelling, or pain.

There are prescriptions and treatments available to treat inflammation in general and in these diseases, but herbal remedies can be effective as well. Herbal remedies have been around for centuries and have been used by ancient cultures. While some do have side effects, for the most part, they are known for being effective and natural. Outside of modern Western cultures, herbal medicine has been a popular treatment in Eastern and native societies.

Herbal treatments can be taken in a capsule form, as a tea or even as a spice. Lately, they have become available in chewable form as well. Here are five herbs that help with inflammation.

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## Turmeric



Turmeric, with its deep, rich orange color, is known for adding flavor to curry dishes. It is also a primary herb for handling inflammation. What makes turmeric so effective in fighting inflammation is an ingredient called curcumin. Curcumin prevents the production of cytokines, enzymes that cause inflammation. It also offers protection to cells from inflammatory damage.

Many people like a turmeric tea, drank once or twice a day. Others take it as a capsule. If you would like to boost your turmeric dosage, eat or prepare foods with that contain the spice including curry and many other Indian dishes. It can also be added to soups and stews.

## Ginger

Known for its spicy flavor in everything from ginger ale to Asian and Jamaican cuisines and from sweet to savory dishes, ginger has medicinal properties from nausea and upset stomach to inflammation. Known officially as *Zingiber officinale*, ginger can be ingested as a tea, or used fresh, dried, grounded or even candied or pickled.



When it comes to inflammation, ginger works on several fronts. It reduces the activity of inflammatory cells and slows the progression of mediators that initially help fight infection and injury. The problem with mediators is that often they continue to produce even after the injury or infection has healed. In this situation, inflammation must be stopped, and ginger is useful in doing just that.

When taking ginger, there are several ways to benefit from the herb. Ginger ale can soothe an upset stomach, but the sugar content doesn't make it ideal for daily use (especially several times a day). When it comes to inflammation, taking ginger can be done in a variety of ways:

**Fresh:** Ginger can be grated into hot water and combined with lemon and taken as a hot beverage. Fresh ginger can also be used in a smoothie.

**Tea:** Steep ginger tea for several minutes. As with fresh ginger, you can add lemon or honey as a sweetener. Turmeric and ginger tea is also available.

## Rosemary



While turmeric and ginger are widely known as herbal treatments for inflammation, rosemary is also a herb used to combat this issue. A savory herb, when used in cooking, rosemary is often used in meat and poultry dishes as well as vegetables.

When it comes to medicinal use, it is known for treatment of inflammation as well as arthritis, asthma, joint swelling and has even been shown

to have positive effects in rats with Alzheimer's.

Like ginger, rosemary works on inhibiting inflammation mediators. Because it is often used to treat joint swelling and arthritis, rosemary is often applied topically as an oil or as an infusion. As an infusion, users are instructed to soak the rosemary leaves for 30 minutes and then use the water as a compress on the infected area.

Rosemary also comes with warnings for pregnant and breastfeeding women who are told to consult with a physician before starting any rosemary treatment. When taken in large (medicinal) amounts, rosemary can be a stimulant to menstrual and uterine blood flow which could result in a miscarriage.

## Cinnamon

This is an herb that almost everyone has in their pantry. Used in everything from hot chocolate to cookies to a savory Mexican mole sauce, it shouldn't be surprising that it has medicinal properties and is known to reduce joint pain. While there are



varieties of cinnamon available, the version with the best results in combatting inflammation is Ceylon cinnamon. Ceylon cinnamon, and cassia cinnamon are both sold within the US as cinnamon. They have a similar taste and a glance at the ingredients won't help. Instead, you'll usually have to seek out specific Ceylon cinnamon.

Like rosemary, there is a warning that comes with it. Too much cinnamon can lead to upset stomach or diarrhea.

Should you decide to use cinnamon to combat inflammation, you can take it in the following ways:

- Sprinkle it on food
- Take a supplement

- Steep a cinnamon stick as a tea

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Inflammation is a common symptom in many ailments: arthritis, Crohn's disease, heart disease, stroke, irritable bowel syndrome, lupus, multiple sclerosis, psoriasis, asthma, Alzheimer's disease, and more. So, combatting inflammation is critical. In fact, it has been said that five of the top 10 causes of death involve inflammation.

Knowing how to combat inflammation is critical to your well-being. So, grab some turmeric tea, chew on some ginger or sprinkle some cinnamon on your oatmeal. It's worth it.