

August 2016 Newsletter



Dr. Hassell joined local author and friend Diane Morgan at Powell's City of Books in downtown Portland last month to talk about salmon, the subject of Diane's latest cookbook, *Salmon: Everything You Need to Know + 50 Recipes*.

Watch out for inflammatory claims!

One of the most enjoyable aspects of a medical practice is working with people who would like a second opinion or need help with applying lifestyle solutions to their health problems. One recent consultation involved a patient with a rheumatologic disease who had been advised to follow an "anti-inflammatory diet" which eliminated caffeine, alcohol, gluten, dairy, soy, corn, eggplant, peppers, tomatoes, and potatoes. The restrictions were challenging – and she wasn't feeling any better. This is key: *she wasn't feeling better!* The highly-restrictive diet she was following eliminated many of the foods which have been shown to build healthy immune systems and suppress inflammation. To gain a better understanding of inflammation we need to focus on immunity and health outcomes.

Let's take a closer look at inflammation

Inflammation is generally our friend, not our enemy, and inflammatory processes are actually critical to the development of a robust immune system.¹ A crucial part of the body's natural response to a localized injury or infection, inflammation increases blood flow, heat, swelling, and pain. This is all part of the healing process. However, if the immune system isn't strong enough to overcome the injury, inflammation can become chronic and debilitating. **This** is why it is so important to keep our immune system tuned up and fighting fit.

Vote anti-inflammatory and pro-immunity

If we're looking for ways to lower our risk of infection, cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and dementia, there are plenty of lifestyle choices we can make. Read on for nine choices associated with better control of inflammation as well as enhanced immunity.

- 1. The Mediterranean diet** is the starting point for evidence-based control of inflammation.² No other dietary pattern is so consistently associated with reduced inflammation **and** better health outcomes. It is refreshingly unrestricted, including essentially all traditional foods – vegetables, fruit, grains, beans, fish, raw nuts and seeds, extra-virgin olive oil, dairy, coffee, tea, and moderate amounts of red meat and wine.
- 2. On the subject of food, it should be noted that just about any weight loss is anti-inflammatory.**³ For the person who is overweight, eliminating refined grains and sugar is probably the single most important step to reducing inflammation and excess weight. (See pages 73–77 in *Good Food, Great Medicine*, 3rd edition.)
- 3. Dairy foods** have been studied extensively; for the vast majority of people dairy is *anti-inflammatory*⁴ and associated with *better* health outcomes. The greatest benefit appears to be from cultured dairy such as plain yogurt and kefir (probiotics improve immunity and lower inflammatory markers), and aged cheeses.
- 4. Whole grains**, including those that *naturally contain gluten*, are associated with less inflammation⁵ and lower death rates, heart disease, infections, and cancers. However, avoid foods with refined grains and *added* gluten, such as most commercially-baked bread; read ingredient lists! (See pages 23-25 and 40–41.)
- 5. Coffee** (yes! and likely tea, too) is associated with less inflammation⁶ and better health outcomes. This does *not* include sweetened coffee drinks – avoid the candy-bar-in-a-cup! (See pages 36–37.)
- 6. Alcohol** – *in moderate amounts* – reduces inflammation,⁷ insulin resistance, diabetes, and heart disease risk. Red wine appears to have the most

¹ Chatila, T. NEJM 2016;375:477-9

² Bonaccio, M. et al. Endocr Metab Immune Disord Drug 2015;15:18-24

³ Calder, P.C. et al. British Journal of Nutrition 2011;106:S5-S78

⁴ Bordoni, A. et al. Crit Rev Food Sci Nutr 2015:1-51

⁵ Vitaglione, P. et al. Am J Clin Nutr 2015;101:251-61

⁶ Aleksandrova, K. et al. AJCN 2015;102:1498-508

⁷ Mathews, M.J. et al. Nutrition Journal 2015;14:1-12

supporting evidence, and we suggest up to 5 ounces of wine per day for women and twice that for men.

7. Extra-virgin olive oil is unique among the vegetable oils, reducing inflammation,⁸ cancer, and heart disease.

8. Nuts reduce inflammation⁹ and improve overall health outcomes. Stick to a handful of raw nuts: more than that can sabotage weight loss efforts. (Roasted nuts and nut butters can be problematic – see page 27.)

9. Moderate exercise has both an anti-inflammatory¹⁰ and antioxidant benefit; it reduces insulin resistance, promotes immunity, and reduces risk of all chronic disease. Exercise every day, at least briefly; do not overlook this POWERFUL anti-inflammatory agent.

Immune-suppressing foods to avoid

Foods that encourage inflammation and suppress immunity are also the same ones that increase our risk for (you guessed it) type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer, dementia, depression, and so on. These are refined grains (see page 46), sugars (see pages 42–45), highly-refined vegetable oils (practically speaking, pretty much everything except extra-virgin olive oil: see pages 47–48), and excessive red meat (more than 3–4 servings per week – see page 29).

What about anti-inflammatory drugs?

Anti-inflammatory drugs such as prednisone and ibuprofen are associated with a broad range of serious side effects and health risks – read the package inserts! It is a good idea to minimize taking these unless they are absolutely critical to your recovery from an illness. Remember that the inflammation process – heat, swelling, pain – is an announcement that your body's immune response team is working hard; your job is to stay out of the way. This is why “anti-inflammatory” medications are not always the best option.

Fill your fridge with flu fighting food!

As fears of the “infection du jour” arise, whether it's the annual flu frenzy or the zika virus, we would be wise to direct our energies into building ourselves a bullet-proof immune system. The first line of defense is our kitchen (our in-house pharmacy!) and our activity choices. So let's get some exercise every day, eat those anti-inflammatory and pro-immunity whole foods listed earlier, and avoid the refined foods that encourage inflammation and suppress immunity.

Good Food, Great Medicine classes

The two-part class series targets weight loss, insulin resistance, and type 2 diabetes, and details steps for preventing or reversing them. The classes are based on the 3rd edition of *Good Food, Great Medicine*, which each participant will receive at the first class.

Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 1):

- Review inter-relationship of excess waistline and weight, insulin resistance (common to most cases of type 2 diabetes), and common chronic diseases.
- Discuss the role of the “key four” – a whole food Mediterranean diet; minimal sweeteners, refined grains and starches; daily activity; and enough sleep.
- Work through the 14 simple steps that target your risk factors and produce effective, lasting change in your waistline, blood sugar, and other health risks.

Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 2):

- Explore practical application of whole food choices and menu planning. See demonstrations of a couple of foundational recipes from *Good Food, Great Medicine*. Review progress, find solutions to challenges, and fine-tune personal action plans.

“I've bounced around for decades trying to find an eating style that is sustainable. I'm very susceptible to simple carbs and will spiral into heroin-strength addiction. I want to function without being hungry [and] adherence to the Mediterranean diet works best... your approach is common sense AND evidence-based! Bravo!” Joan B, MD/MSPH

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| Time: | 6 – 8 pm Wednesday |
| Dates: | 10/19/16 (Part 1) and 10/26/16 (Part 2) |
| Location: | Providence St. Vincent Medical Center |
| Cost: | \$100 (2-class series) |
| Registration: | Call 503.291.1777 to reserve a spot |

Dr. Hassell's speaking events

9/13/2016 – Providence St. Vincent Medical Center Grand Rounds:

Ischemic Heart Disease: Which Diet and Lifestyle Choices Really Matter? Portland, OR.

9/15/2016 – Pacific University Physician Assistant Program:

Ischemic Heart Disease: Which Diet and Lifestyle Choices Really Matter? Hillsboro, OR.

9/30/2016 – Great Western Council of Optometry:

Transformational Collaboration in Chronic Care Delivery Panel Discussion. Portland, OR.

10/19/2016 and 10/26/2016 – Good Food, Great Medicine 2-part

Lifestyle Change Class Series: Portland, OR. For registration information call our office at 503.291.1777.

Sign up for this free monthly medical + lifestyle newsletter at Goodfoodgreatmedicine.com

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

1 Thessalonians 5:21 (KJV)

⁸ Bogani, P. et al. *Atherosclerosis* 2007;190:181-6

⁹ Yu, Z. et al. *AJCN* 2016;doi:10.3945/ajcn.116.134205

¹⁰ Codella, R. et al. *Eur Rev Med Pharmacol Sci* 2015;19:3709-22