

THE ANTI-ASTHMA DIET

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disorder of the airways and what you eat can affect the severity of the problem.

The Western diet, with its frequent consumption of red meat, fast food and highly processed snack foods, increases a person's risk of developing asthma. And the latest research shows if you already have asthma, the Western diet can make it worse.

These same foods also promote obesity—a major risk factor for asthma. Studies show that as the number and size of fat cells increase, the inflammation in the body also increases. Further, corticosteroid drugs, prescribed to lower inflammation, are less effective in obese people.

so what should you eat?

If you have asthma, you require even more antioxidant-rich foods in order to dampen the inflammation in your lungs. Focus on the following:

- ▶ **Omega-3.** Sources include linseed, chia seeds and soybeans (or fish).
- ▶ **Soluble fibre.** Cook foods such as dry beans, peas, lentils, barley, oats, eggplant and okra to ensure that at least 10 grams of this type of fibre are consumed each day. Soluble fibre is fermented in the intestine to produce short-chain fatty acids,

which activate anti-inflammatory pathways beneficial for asthma.

- ▶ **Fruits and vegetables.** Incorporate at least two fruits and five vegetables each day, because loading up on food antioxidants can suppress the viral and allergen triggers of asthma. Conversely, consuming a diet low in antioxidants for just 10 days worsens inflammation in the lungs, decreases lung function and increases asthma symptoms.

Foods to avoid. Avoid foods rich in saturated and trans fats and refined omega-6 vegetable oils, because they can drive inflammation. These include fatty meats, full-cream dairy, butter, take-out meals, biscuits, doughnuts, pastries, pies and many vegetable oils such as sunflower and soybean oil.

a single meal can make a difference

Research from the University of Newcastle in Australia showed that, compared to low-fat yoghurt, a fast-food meal that was fed to stable asthmatics reduced the effectiveness of their bronchodilator medication within hours of eating.



Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and co-author of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information or follow her on Twitter @CulinaryMed.