

Inflammation- Do We Need Just a Small Amount?

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Everywhere you turn today there is another article speaking about the anti-inflammatory lifestyle. Most of these articles have one thing in common, they are all very one sided and only speak badly about inflammation. Yet, do we understand any better the truth from what we have read in all of these articles? Well, the science certainly seems to push us in that direction. I am curious, why when we look at all of this science do we never seem to look at the natural pattern of how the body actually works? It also occurs to me that when we perceive something as “bad” we want to get rid of it and be as far away from it as possible. Perhaps when it comes to the way the body naturally functions, a little bit of “bad” might not be so bad. Perhaps we are also in “the big picture” looking at the symptom even though the science seems to think that inflammation is more a cause than a symptom. Well, maybe science needs to take off their tunnel vision glasses.

Here’s a thought, maybe we should focus on supporting the body’s ability to have a healthy inflammation response. This allows the body to do its job more effectively versus shutting off pain and inflammation completely. The problem with shutting a signal down completely is that it prevents the body from letting us know when something is wrong. That is the true function of pain and inflammation, to let us know that something is in fact wrong. What if your house was on fire and the alarm didn’t work? Chances are if you didn’t die it would mess you up pretty badly. Perhaps this is just a theory but, with an ever rising rate of anti-inflammatory usage and an alarming rate of deadly disease perhaps there is actually a connection.

There are many individual things that cause or trigger inflammation but, they all go back to its main cause - *stress*. As a master herbalist, I think one essential category of herbs to support not only a healthy inflammation response but also a healthy stress response are adaptogens. The main purpose of an adaptogen is to support the body’s ability to have a healthy stress response. Even better, they have the ability to support a nonspecific healthy stress response. What exactly does “nonspecific” mean you ask? Well, it means that it won’t just affect one system but instead it will have a positive effect on the entire body. Most importantly, the areas that need the most support will get it. This happens because the entire body will be able to function on a much more efficient level due to the support of the adaptogens.

Some of my personal top picks for adaptogens are maca root, rhodiola, reishi mushrooms, chaga mushroom, schizandra berry, ashwagandha root, cordyceps and eleuthero. The key here is not how much you take but that you are consistent. Consistency and compliance are the two greatest factors for optimal results. Feel free to use one or more of these wonderful plants on a daily basis but always remember to listen to your body as there is no perfect dosage. This will simply come down to how you respond and how much you are willing to learn about your body. I will leave you with the words of the great porky pig as I say, “A ble a ble a ble that’s all folks.”

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herb and natural food industry for the last 16 years. To date Mike has written 2 books on herbal medicine and has started his own website www.eliteherbalist.com. This is an educational website for athletes on herbal medicine and whole food nutrition. Mike has been competing in powerlifting for 23 years on a nation and world level as an elite level lifter.