



# Inflammation: Friend or Foe? Part I

By: Gary E. Foresman, MD

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Inflammation is the normal acute response to injury, without which we could not survive. Thus acute inflammatory responses are usually our dear friend, how we heal wounds, fight off infections, repair injuries, a vital melody of evolutionary biology, an exquisite symphony of the selfless cells and their messengers defending the whole to restore balance. Yes, any good intern knew the four hallmarks of inflammation by wrote; Calor (heat), Rubor (redness), Dolor (pain), and Tumor (edema or swelling). Yet so often the process goes awry, control of the inflammatory responses miscue, and chronic inflammation ensues, most certainly our foe. Most Jekyll and Hyde, no?

The topic of inflammation regulation could fill textbooks, yet each day we learn a new complexity, a new mediator. Pub Med has thousands of articles, often each tens of pages long with the author extolling the importance of even just one mediator of inflammation! The enormity of the complexity of this subject cannot be overstated. So let's find a few orienting generalizations and work forward with lifestyle and natural approaches that anyone can easily apply to help your body heal.

Jack Challem updated his book [The Inflammation Syndrome](#) in 2010, and it can serve as a reference background guide to our discussion. ([jackchallem.com](http://jackchallem.com)). I will give you my overview and necessary testing to guide how your body handles such a fascinatingly challenging “middle path” to inflammation regulation. As always, we will approach foundationally, for if we just approach each symptom independent of lifestyle, we will always find a new medicine/drug/poison to give temporary relief without treating the underlying deficiency or excess.

The study of psychoneuroendocrinimmunology points to the interconnection of stress/perception and the neurologic, endocrine and immunologic systems. The number one cause of all disease and inflammation remains stress perception. We have dedicated a series of articles on our website to this: [The Stress Management landing page](#). If we continually ingest pro-inflammatory misinformation into our systems, we cannot cure the myriad of inflammatory disorders, nearly every chronic disease, which we face. Healing stress becomes possible through self-realization/stress reduction practices, and upon minimizing inflammatory jobs, relationships, habits and worldviews.

Our nutrition, the substances from which we build our bodies, plays such a key role in whether a spark of inflammation leads to an appropriate healing response or leads to a

chronic fire that hurts more than heals. The composition of our cell membranes holds the key to local inflammation responses via mediators (called eicosanoids) directly related to the balance of fats in your diet! You are what you eat. Follow the guidelines for a Paleo diet perfectly for three weeks ([Here's the MPM Primal strategy page](#)) and evaluate how you feel. Reintroduce the foods you miss and evaluate how you feel.

I must emphasize the importance of your gastrointestinal health, food sensitivities, and leaky gut. Review our [Digestive Difficulties PowerPoint](#), following one of the basic tenets of naturopathic medicine: "Heal the Gut First". This allows me to segue into another trite but true-ism, "You gotta sleep and you gotta poop". We need a minimum of 7 hours and usually more of restful sleep to heal adequately. We all should have at least two heathy, well-formed bowel movements each day for natural detoxification. The more toxic, the more inflamed the body becomes. How about one more trite but true-ism: "The Solution to Pollution is Dilution", which means drink more water.

Exercise deficiency and excess both exist, and the former far exceeds the latter. Truly thousands of articles exist on one of the great exacerbators of inflammation known, exercise deficiency. It has only one cure. Note that a body in motion tends to stay in motion, although a little off of what Newton's first law meant, what I have also found to be true is that a body that goes to rest, just stops moving. Even one 30 minute walk daily covering 1 and 1/2 miles provides a profound immune regulating influence. As always, the best form of exercise is the one you will do!

The rest of our inflammation series will focus on the specifics of inflammation. A holistic approach comes from knowing that whatever diagnosis you may identify with, only you can heal yourself. Treat the human being with that condition, and don't focus just on the diagnosis, which more often than not is merely a description of the problem, for which a poison will be prescribed, that modifies the symptom whilst ignoring the problem. *Our symptoms are our teachers*; only you get what the lesson plan is!

An evaluation of your endocrine system function provides great insight as to whether or not there is an underlying hormonal cause of inflammation. The following assessments can also help indicate how better to maintain a healthy ageing response.

The endocrine part of psychoneuroendocrinimmunology includes evaluating thyroid function in everyone including Free T4, FreeT3, TSH, Reverse T3, and both TPO Ab and Tg Ab. Most doctors just measure TSH, a lab test that will miss at least 95% of thyroid problems. Perform adrenal testing as well, looking at cortisol and DHEA, looking for youthful levels that don't merely go by what the laboratory reference range states is normal. Also consider salivary adrenal profiles. All endocrine disturbances can manifest with immune/inflammation dysregulation!

Men, our testosterone levels are falling due to environmental influences. The average male testosterone has fallen nearly 1% every year, meaning the average 50 year old from today has a nearly 20% lower testosterone than a 50 year old from 20 years ago!!! Test total and free testosterone, DHT, and estradiol if any known chronic inflammation exists. Again, don't use laboratory reference ranges as "normal", seek youthful levels.

Women's hormones, bioidentical hormones and the approach to fertility, PMS, and menopause could fill books as well. Anecdotally, so many women can relate their inflammation, weight gain, and so much more directly to menopause. Correctly balance the hormones, and inflammation can go away. Using synthetic hormones remains one of the travesties of modern medicine, telling women that bioidentical hormones are inherently dangerous is a crime in the more modern era. Specific sex hormone testing for a woman depends on her stage of life.

We will continue our series with what other testing and treatment entails when we wish to manage a dysregulated inflammatory response!

Your Journey to Health and Healing,  
Gary E. Foresman MD

Website: [www.middlepathmedicine.com](http://www.middlepathmedicine.com)

E-mail: [info@middlepathmedicine.com](mailto:info@middlepathmedicine.com)