



Leafy Greens: Inflammation Fighters!

Is inflammation good or bad? Both! Acute inflammation is a necessary part of healing; it sends white blood cells to the scene when we're injured or ill. Chronic inflammation, however, is unhealthy; it can cause problems in almost every organ in the body and is thought to be a root cause of many chronic conditions from diabetes and arthritis to hay fever and heart disease.

The good news is that eating a wide range of healthy, whole foods can help fight dangerous chronic inflammation. One good inflammation-fighting choice most of us don't get enough of is dark, leafy greens.



Leafy greens like spinach, kale, chard, arugula, endive, turnip greens, beet greens, and collard greens all contain significant concentrations of vitamins and other nutrients that have been found to reduce chronic inflammation. Vitamin A, vitamin D, vitamin E and vitamin K, just to name a few, have all shown, in research, that they can fight inflammation. Many leafy greens also contain alpha-linolenic acid, an omega-3 fat that is known for its anti-inflammatory benefits.

When you're choosing leafy greens, keep these tips in mind:

- ▲ **Choose darker greens.** In general, the darker the color of greens, the more healthy nutrients they contain. Iceberg lettuce is a lightweight compared to spinach and kale, for instance.
- ▲ **Pair greens with olive oil.** Many of the important vitamins in greens can only be absorbed by our bodies in the presence of oil. In one study, researchers found that people eating a salad of spinach, romaine, tomatoes and carrots absorbed plenty of nutrients with a full-fat salad dressing – but only a “negligible” amount when they chose fat-free salad dressing.¹
- ▲ **Enjoy greens both raw and cooked.** While cooking makes some nutrients easier to absorb, heat diminishes or destroys others. So eat some of your greens cooked, and enjoy others in salads.



¹American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Brown et al., 2004 Aug;80(2):396-403