

UNDERSTANDING INFLAMMATION

If you've ever jammed your finger, scraped your knee, or sprained your ankle, you're already familiar with inflammation. The accompanying redness, swelling, and pain are sure signs that inflammation is taking place. Inflammation is part of your body's response to nearly any type of physical injury. It's one of the ways that your body protects itself, and begins its repair process.

IS INFLAMMATION AFFECTING YOUR HEALTH?

Inflammation is not always as obvious or benign as the above examples. It can silently involve every cell in your body and, over time, negatively affect your health and abilities. For example, allergies, joint pain, and premature aging are just a few of the common ailments linked to "systemic inflammation." But if you can't see inflammation, how do you measure it?

The levels of certain chemicals in your blood are known to increase with increased levels of inflammation. One of these chemical markers for inflammation is a protein called C-reactive protein (CRP). CRP is often measured in conjunction with other blood tests, and normal values are well established. From a clinical standpoint, a CRP level of less than 5 milligrams per liter of blood is considered normal. "Normal" may not be optimal, though. Many medical researchers believe that even slight elevations of CRP are tied to increased risk for heart attack, stroke, and many other diseases.

Note: If you'd like to have your CRP measured, consult your physician, who can order a simple blood test. Alternatively, you can schedule your own testing with the help of organizations such as the [Life Extension Foundation](#). The typical cost is about \$60.

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CONTROLLING INFLAMMATION WITH DIET

Your body creates both inflammatory and anti-inflammatory chemicals, called "prostaglandins" from nutrients in the food that you eat. Imbalances in your diet can lead to the creation of excessive amounts of inflammatory prostaglandins, which fuel your body's inflammatory response. Conversely, the consumption of certain nutrients, like omega-3 fatty acids, allows your body to produce more anti-inflammatory prostaglandins, which it uses to reduce inflammation.

Modern nutrition experts, including [Andrew Weil](#), [Nicholas Perricone](#), and [Barry Sears](#), have written many books about diet's link to inflammation, and have promoted the increased consumption of omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and other nutrients that help control or reduce inflammation. Until now, however, the recommendations regarding anti-inflammation diets have been limited to a

relatively small group of foods. That limitation has been lifted with the introduction of the IF (Inflammation Factor) Rating™.

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THE IF RATING™ SYSTEM

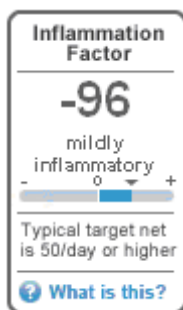
[Monica Reinagel](#), a noted nutritional researcher, is the creator of the IF (Inflammation Factor) Rating™ system. Before creating her system, she spent years studying systemic inflammation, and compiled data from hundreds of different research studies. Her system considers the inflammatory and anti-inflammatory effects of more than 20 separate nutrients. In Nutrition Data's opinion, this rating system is the most sophisticated approach to date for predicting the inflammatory effects of foods.

Early in 2006, Monica authored the book [The Inflammation Free Diet Plan](#), which provides simple guidelines for using her system to plan your diet, and includes IF Ratings for 1,500 common foods. Nutrition Data recommends this book to anyone considering using the advice of the IF Rating™ system. You can also learn more by visiting [InflammationFactor.com](#).

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IF RATINGS ON NUTRITION DATA

Nutrition Data provides IF Ratings for most foods in its database. IF Ratings appear on [Nutrition Facts](#) pages and have a format similar to the example below:



IF Positives

This food contains known anti-inflammatory nutrients, including monounsaturated fat, selenium, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and folate.

IF Negatives

This food contains known inflammatory nutrients, including arachidonic acid and saturated fat. The IF Rating™ provides an estimate of this food's effect on inflammation.

A negative IF Rating™ means that the food is considered to be inflammatory (i.e. increases inflammation), and a positive IF Rating™ indicates that the food is considered to be anti-inflammatory (i.e. reduces inflammation). There is no upper or lower limit for the IF Ratings, so you'll see a wide range of values reported. IF Ratings are also dependent on serving size, so you'll see the IF Rating™ value change if you change the serving size in the Serving Size drop-down at the top of the Nutrition Facts page.

A composite IF Rating™ is also included on your [My Tracking](#) report. This composite IF Rating™ is the sum of IF Ratings for all foods in your running total. It's OK to eat inflammatory foods, but for maximum health, Monica Reinagel recommends consuming a diet with an overall positive (anti-inflammatory) composite IF Rating.

Note: IF Ratings are provided as a courtesy to Nutrition Data's users, but Nutrition Data is unable to provide specific guidance regarding their use. For further help with interpreting these values and planning your diet, please consult [The Inflammation Free Diet Plan](#) by Monica Reinagel or visit InflammationFactor.com.