

SLOWING DOWN



INFLAMM-AGEING

It's the current buzzword in the anti-ageing world. We explore the way chronic inflammation accelerates ageing and how to slow things down

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The word “inflammation” comes from the Latin word “*inflamatio*”, which means “to inflame or set on fire”, explains Dr Arien van der Merwe, owner of Healthy Living Space in Pretoria (www.drarien.co.za).

“The term ‘inflamm-ageing’ was first coined by Italian Prof Claudio Franceschi in 2000 to describe the ageing phenomenon caused by chronic (persistent) inflammation, the fuel that flames the fire of today’s chronic degenerative diseases – in wellness-speak, your ‘health challenges’. It’s important to understand that your body has an innate intelligence, an inborn ability and an inclination to heal itself, using the inflammatory response as part of its

natural healing mechanism,” she says.

“Acute inflammation is a good thing – you need it for survival. When you experience a sore throat, a cold or flu, have a skin rash, suffer from an insect bite, get sunburnt, have hay fever or are injured, the typical symptoms of redness, pain, swelling and increased temperature (heat) in the affected areas are the normal responses of your body’s immune (defence) system to potential disease-causing organisms such as viruses and bacteria. Without this process of inflammation, your body wouldn’t be able to recover so quickly.

“However,” she continues, “when you interfere with this process on a physical, mental, emotional or behavioural level through unhealthy eating choices and stressful ways of living, you sabotage this natural response, allowing insidious inflammation to become a threat and even a silent killer, rather than a support to your health.”

WHAT IT'S DOING TO YOUR BODY

According to David Arthur, a clinical pharmacist and one of the co-founders of the Integrative Medical Centre (IMC) in Johannesburg who’s certified by the American Board of Anti-Ageing Healthcare Practitioners (www.imcmed.co.za), inflammatory diseases now affect one in two Americans.

“Scientists are finding more and more chronic diseases that have inflammation at their root – and they’re on the increase. Ten years ago, cardiologists believed that elevated cholesterol was the only major cause of heart disease – the number one killer in the USA today (and the second in SA, after HIV/Aids, according to the Heart & Stroke Foundation), but now inflammation’s been added to the risk factors. While air quality has improved over the years, the incidence of asthma has doubled and currently one in every three Americans suffers from arthritis – twice as