

many as 20 years ago,” he says.

Says Van der Merwe: “Many studies reveal that hidden systemic [affecting the whole body or a particular system] inflammation may be the common denominator linking most modern-day chronic diseases, including heart disease, metabolic syndrome, high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, cancer and arthritis. What starts as a normal, healthy immune response turns into an extended, out-of-control reaction that destroys the cells and tissues of your body, paving the way for degenerative disease and accelerated ageing.”

Low-grade inflammation is often a constant eroding presence in your body as you get older, gradually leading to auto-immune, inflammatory and age-related diseases, she adds. “Sometimes inflamm-ageing can persist undetected for weeks, months or years, only manifesting as general tiredness and lack of vitality. When symptoms do appear, it’s often at a time when too much damage and severe loss of function have already occurred. That’s why it’s

CHECK YOUR INFLAMM-AGEING RISK

According to David Arthur, you could be at risk if you:

Eat unhealthily. Refined carbohydrates and sugar increase inflammation, while trans and unsaturated fats raise inflammation-boosting molecules and heart disease risk.

Are overweight. Hormone and glucose imbalances, as well as increased insulin levels, put you at risk of diabetes.

Don’t sleep enough. Lack of sufficient sleep can affect several hormone and metabolic processes. Studies have shown that just a week of sleep deprivation can cause significant alterations in glucose tolerance, which puts you at risk of developing diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

sometimes referred to as the ‘silent killer’, affecting every part of your body from your digestive system (irritable bowel syndrome/spastic colon and gastritis) to your brain (depression, dementia

and Alzheimer’s disease), your skin (acne, eczema and dermatitis) and your joints (arthritis).”

HOW TO SLOW THINGS DOWN

Today you can undergo health DNA screening to determine whether you’re a carrier or have a genetic predisposition towards inflammation. Arthur and Van der Merwe maintain that lifestyle has a huge impact on inflamm-ageing and that there are several changes you can make to slow down and reverse its negative effects.

Anti-inflammatory food helps reduce inflammation throughout the body, as well as age-related inflammatory diseases (eg osteo-arthritis) and the activation of ageing genes. Ensure your diet includes:

- **Unsaturated fats** from nuts, seeds, avocado, olive and canola oils to reduce inflammatory molecules and heart disease risk.
- **Omega-3 fats** found in oily fish (Norwegian salmon, snoek, trout, sardines and anchovies) which activate anti-inflammation genes and are building blocks for the production of anti-inflammatory molecules.
- **Moderate alcohol** has been linked to lower blood levels of inflammation. Limit yourself to one glass of red wine a day.
- **Antioxidants** found in fruit and veggies (especially brightly coloured ones), spices and herbs such as cloves, oregano, rosemary, ginger, cinnamon and turmeric, green and rooibos tea, dark chocolate and red wine reduce inflammatory molecule production.
- **Fibre**, which may exert its anti-inflammatory effects by helping to control blood glucose, insulin, fat and cholesterol levels.

Supplement with anti-inflammatory nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids (EPA and DHA) from fish or krill oil, curcumin (in turmeric), boswellia, cat’s claw and green tea extract and antioxidants, vitamins A, C and E, quercetin, resveratrol, grapeseed extract, N-acetyl cysteine, alpha lipoic acid, co-enzyme Q10, selenium and zinc.

INFLAMM-AGEING WATCHPOINTS

David advises getting yourself checked if you:

- Battle with continual sore joints, backache and allergies, as these are signs of long-term, low-grade inflammation.
- Are depressed or have memory loss, which can indicate mental conditions associated with inflammation such as dementia or Alzheimer’s disease.
- Suffer from digestion problems. High acidity affects hormone levels and could potentially lead to rheumatoid arthritis, colitis and Crohn’s disease.

Reduce stress. Chronically elevated or unbalanced stress hormones (eg cortisol) can lead to depressed thyroid function, Alzheimer’s disease, dementia, insulin resistance and disturbed sleep.

Supplement with magnesium in combination with other minerals in a biocellular complex, which acts as a general cell tonic while reducing inflammation and systemic stress. Low magnesium levels have been implied in nearly every single disease linked to an underlying inflammatory process, eg high blood pressure, heart disease, arthritis, fibromyalgia, diabetes and depression.

Take pre- and probiotics to aid digestion and restore the balance of healthy bacteria in your gut, thereby reducing inflammation.

Learn how to relax both mind and body and lower inflammation through yoga practice, daily meditation and deep-breathing exercises.

Keep moving. Regular, moderate exercise such as swimming, walking, dancing and yoga reduces inflammation and neutralises the effects of stress. Personal trainer Tamerin Court of Goddess Vibes Private Exercise Studio for Women (www.goddessvibes.com) describes Power-Plate as the ultimate anti-inflamm-ageing activity and suggests building up to exercising for at least three weekly sessions of 45-60 minutes. **D**