

# Business Standard

## Everyday foods that trigger inflammation—and what to eat in their place

*Experts share which everyday foods might be silently inflaming your body and the anti-inflammatory superfoods you should add to your diet*

Barkha Mathur | [New Delhi](#)



Your everyday diet might be quietly messing with your overall health (Photo: Adobestock)

Feeling sluggish, bloated, or moody? Your lunchbox could be the culprit—or maybe that “light snack” that ends up being a carb-loaded trap. Your everyday diet might be quietly messing with your energy, mood, and even your skin due to inflammation. We asked experts to guide what to eat and what to avoid to stop inflammation in its tracks.

What is inflammation, and why should you care?

According to a New Delhi-based lifestyle and wellness coach, inflammation is your body’s built-in emergency response. Get a cut, catch a cold, or sprain your ankle, and your immune system kicks in to heal it. That’s acute inflammation. But here’s where it gets tricky: when your body stays in “attack mode” all the time (thanks to

processed food, stress, poor sleep, and pollution), it creates chronic inflammation. That's when the real trouble starts: fatigue, acne, brain fog, frequent colds, joint pain, or bloating.

Asad Hussain, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of fitness and health solutions company OddsFitness, said, "Chronic inflammation is at the root of diseases like diabetes, heart disease, even cancer. But the good news? You can take back control, one meal at a time."

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### **Which everyday foods are secretly inflaming your body?**

These common culprits are inflaming your body from the inside out:

- Refined carbs like white bread, sugary cereals, and pasta
- Packaged snacks with trans fats, preservatives, and food colourings
- Sugary drinks and foods with high-fructose corn syrup
- Processed meats like bacon, sausages, and deli cuts
- Unhealthy oils (vegetable oils high in omega-6, margarine)
- Alcohol overload, especially sweet cocktails and beer

Dr Sakhalkar warned: "These foods confuse your immune system and create unnecessary inflammation. Over time, this can lead to serious health risks even in your twenties and thirties."

### **What are anti-inflammatory superfoods, and how do they differ from healthy foods?**

"Anti-inflammatory superfoods are like the elite task force of your dietary defence system," said Dr Sakhalkar. These aren't just healthy—they are loaded with powerful compounds that actively switch off inflammation at the molecular level.

Here are some must-haves:

- Turmeric (with black pepper): Curcumin fights inflammatory proteins like NF-κB
- Fatty fish (salmon, sardines): Rich in omega-3s that calm prostaglandins and leukotrienes
- Berries: Packed with polyphenols that fight oxidative stress
- Green tea and matcha: Full of anti-inflammatory catechins

**Supportive anti-inflammatory foods include:**

- Whole grains like oats and quinoa
- Dark leafy greens (spinach, kale)
- Legumes and lentils
- Olive oil and nuts

Superfoods give you a powerful anti-inflammatory punch, while everyday healthy foods create a solid, sustainable foundation.

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**Should you eat anti-inflammatory foods even if you feel fine?**

You may feel fine, but your body might be waging a silent battle. Chronic inflammation can quietly raise your risk for heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, brain fog, and premature ageing.

According to Dr Sakhalkar, “Inflammation is like a slow leak in your health. You don’t see it until it starts flooding your life with issues. Anti-inflammatory foods help lower markers like CRP, IL-6, and TNF-alpha, and that means less pain, more energy, and better mood regulation in the short term.”

**What does an anti-inflammatory meal look like on a busy day?**

Here's your desk lunch (or dinner) makeover:

- Grilled salmon or tofu
- Quinoa salad with baby spinach, cherry tomatoes, and olive oil
- A handful of walnuts
- A slice of pineapple or a bowl of berries
- Green tea instead of cola

If you're ordering out, skip the white rice and opt for brown rice or millet. Ditch deep-fried sides and ask for stir-fried veggies. Easy swaps, huge payoff.

### **Can you ever eat pizza or fries again?**

Balance matters. This isn't about swearing off the food you love. It's about being aware of what you're feeding your body regularly. Dr Sakhalkar said, "Having a treat occasionally is totally okay. It's the daily habits that shape your health outcomes."

### **Why do you feel off even when you eat well?**

Food isn't always the only factor triggering inflammation. Lifestyle plays a huge role too. Asad Hussain explains:

- Chronic stress: Cortisol overload triggers inflammatory molecules
- Poor sleep: Less than 7 hours? You're raising systemic inflammation
- Pollution and toxins: Even that "harmless" scented candle or air freshener
- Sitting all day: Inactivity increases belly fat, which pumps out inflammatory chemicals

The experts underscored that a holistic fix isn't about perfection—it is about consistency. Move more, stress less, sleep deeper, and eat smarter.

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