



On Inflammation with Dr. MaryAnne Harrington

Today we're going to talk about inflammation with **Dr. MaryAnne Harrington**, one of the doctors at Maximum Performance Chiropractic in Costa Mesa, CA. MaryAnne specializes in the **treatment and rehabilitation of injuries** using conservative and natural therapies. She holds a number of certifications, including Active Release Technique (A.R.T.) nutritional counseling, work ergonomics and wellness, as well as being a yoga instructor.

Candice: Why don't you tell us about your experience and practice before we get started on inflammation.

MaryAnne: I am a sports chiropractor that **specializes in treating the body from a holistic standpoint**. From an injury perspective, that is making sure we're addressing the entire body, or from a nutritional and digestive perspective, treating everything from what we're putting into our mouths to allowing us to get the most out of our nutrition.

My background... I graduated from Logan college of Chiropractic, which is in St. Louis and from that school I did receive a Master of Science in Nutrition and Human Performance. We moved out to southern cal to open up a practice, where we wanted to live. We really enjoy the active population out here, that's the people that we want to help. **We want to keep people moving and doing the things that they love to do as long as they want to do them.**

Candice: You have an impressive background!

Why don't we get started talking about what inflammation is so we can get a solid understanding of it before we dive in to the details.

MaryAnne: Perfect. So, inflammation has 2 different heads. Let's just talk about it in general The word inflammation comes from the Latin word *inflamo*, which means *to ignite*, or *I ignite*. Inflammation is the body's natural response to some sort of trigger. It's a pathologic process, and it's got a lot of components, which we don't need to get in to all of the details about. But it occurs in response to an injury or an abnormal stimulation in the body. **The body produces inflammation to rid the body of the injury or trigger.**



Candice: Great, now that we have an understanding of what inflammation is, why do we need to be concerned with inflammation?

MaryAnne: The main concern with inflammation is the chronic inflammation. Before we get to that, let's talk about your typical acute inflammation, which is the type of inflammation that we want and that we definitely need. **Acute inflammation is good thing.** Let's say you roll your ankle. The body sends out inflammatory markers to fix this problem. You get redness, the area gets hot, you get swelling, discoloration, and pain. Those are the main signs of inflammation, along with what we call "functio laesa". That is inhibited or lost function of that area. You're not going to step on your ankle right after you roll it, and if you did you're going to get even more pain. So that's the inflammation that we need. Without that type of inflammation, we wouldn't have healing of infections or a cut on the skin.

We need inflammation. However, what we don't want is chronic inflammation. **Chronic inflammation is something that lasts for several months or even years.** It can come from many different sources, like failure to get rid of what was causing the inflammation in the first place or a chronic irritant of low intensity. **Chronic inflammation can also come from an autoimmune response** due to a self antigen, meaning that the immune system is reacting to something that is in the body that it thinks is a foreign object. So that is the type of inflammation that we want to be mindful with.

Candice: That was really good for laying the groundwork of our discussion. We understand that inflammation can be good and that it can help us heal, but over the long-term we want to minimize it.

What would you say are the most common medical conditions that you see associate with chronic inflammation?

MaryAnne: Chronic inflammation has to do with a lot of diseases that are very common...**asthma, ulcers, rheumatoid arthritis, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, and also something that is called metabolic syndrome.** This isn't one specific syndrome; it's a culmination of many issues. This includes things like high amounts of visceral fat, meaning that you're very large around the waist, high triglycerides in the blood. Low HDL cholesterol, high blood pressure, and then high blood sugar. Those things are both associated with chronic inflammation and metabolic syndrome.



One other aspect that we find highly associated with inflammation in is **autoimmune disorders**. This is where much of my background research has been. We are finding them to be more common, and they can be triggered by little things like diet and daily irritants.

Candice: Right, we'd love to talk more about your research. Let me ask you this before we dive deeper. I see a lot of skin conditions becoming more common as well as the auto-immune conditions.

What would you say are the most common skin conditions that you see associated with inflammation?

MaryAnne: I would say in order of severity, psoriasis, which is also a type of **arthritis, eczema, rosacea, and acne**. Some common forms of acne can be related to inflammation as well.

Candice: That's completely right. My background is in skincare. One interesting thing that I see is that the skin can be an indicator for a person's health. So chronic inflammation can certainly manifest itself in a person's skin. Ok, let's get back to your practice.

What do you personally and in your practice do to reduce inflammation?

MaryAnne: **The biggest thing we can do is to find out what their trigger is.** A lot of that has to do with taking a complete medical history, finding out what potential triggers are in their day to day interactions that could be causing the inflammation or could be the root cause to have that self-perpetuating inflammation. I have to say that **number one would have to be diet**. We see things in people's diets that cause inflammation. They'll have skin reactions or other types of reactions like achy joints. To start the process of reducing inflammation we have to find out what diet triggers are there. So there's a lot that we can do in the realm of diet to help them with their inflammation.



Candice: So tell us a little more about that.

What are the common triggers that you see and what kind of things can you do to help people find out what their triggers are?

MaryAnne: There are quite a few different triggers, and sometimes it can even be an allergy. I've helped people find allergies to things like citrus fruits or tomatoes that they didn't know about and that could be causing their symptoms. One of the biggest hurdles that we have is that the **symptoms aren't always digestive**. It's not always that you just feel bloated or have excess gas. It could be a skin symptom, which would make you think that it's not dietary related at all. So there's common inflammatory things, such as a lot of **grains, especially wheat, soy products, some forms of dairy** depending on the person. **Corn** can be a trigger as well. It really depends on the person and how they digest certain foods.

Candice: So if someone is reading this now and they are having symptoms, either skin related or digestive, what could you do to help them find out what their trigger is?

MaryAnne: The best thing to do is to start keeping a food diary. Writing down on paper what you eat is not only beneficial in the realm of what symptoms you had that same day, but also in keeping you accountable for eating good foods. So there's a double benefit there. To really find out what it is that's triggering your inflammation is a diary of the food you're eating and the symptoms you're experiencing that day. For example, if you had a meal that was heavy with bread at lunchtime and you had some symptoms that afternoon, it's those types of correlations that we're looking for.

Candice: So it is always within a few hours that you'd experience symptoms then?

MaryAnne: No, not at all. The unfortunate thing about dietary issues is that it could take days before you see any symptoms, and sometimes you don't even get symptoms. Our digestive systems are so diverse, and they change on a day-to-day basis. **70% of our immune system is found in the digestive system**. We've got many different types of microbes in the gut flora that play a huge role in how we digest food. If those have been wiped out or are not working properly, you can have a breakdown in the system, and that's when we get symptoms.



Candice: Would you say at certain times when your digestive system is weaker, you would experience symptoms from eating say dairy for example, that you wouldn't normally experience symptoms from? Is that a possibility, then that sometime you would experience symptoms and other times you wouldn't?

MaryAnne: Yes, absolutely. That does add a layer of complexity.

Candice: Ok we've covered some of the things that can be triggers.

What kind of foods do you eat yourself and do you recommend that we do eat?

MaryAnne: My number one recommendation when it comes to food is and diet is to eat real food. That's the most basic answer I can give you. To get a bit more in depth, you want to have a clean diet. **What I mean by clean is food that's as natural as possible, and what I mean by that is that you get it as organic as possible and as close to the source as possible.** We're talking about perimeter shopping when it comes to the grocery store, spending most of the money in the produce section. **Fresh fruits, vegetables, lean meats, grass fed beef** when possible. **Staying out of the aisles** is really the best piece of advice I can give someone when it comes to what types of food you can eat.

Candice: That's a cool way of looking at it. I'll have to keep that in mind next time I'm at the grocery store. **They put the processed foods, which make the most money, in the aisles, and then everything else on the perimeter.**

MaryAnne: The more processed, the worse off is really the take home message. There are other things you can add that have been known to reduce inflammation, like taking a **fish oil supplement, drinking green tea.** Really what it comes down to is finding whole, clean foods, and incorporating those into your diet.



Candice: I think that everyone can agree on that, no matter what specific type of diet they prefer.

If our readers are experiencing issues with their skin, and they are looking to switch to natural skin care products while changing their diet, what would you recommend they look for in skincare products?

MaryAnne: That's a great question, and it comes down to looking at skin in a different way. **Our skin is the largest organ in our body, and we absorb through the skin.** Not as easily as through the digestive system, but we also do absorb through our skin. So I have the same advice for skincare as I have for diet.

You are wanting to get all natural, **organic products.** They should be as close to the source as possible. So you're looking for things like organic aloe, and making sure it is a **plant based product instead of a manufactured chemical product.** Look for products that have **calming** effects and ingredients such as chamomile. Make sure that the oils that are used in the products are good quality oils... which I know that you're very much familiar with as the formulator for Organic Radiance Skincare.

Candice: I certainly am. We use exactly the type of things you just mentioned in our skincare line.

What kind of herbs would you recommend for reducing inflammation? Is it so specific that people need to see a doctor on a case-by-case basis, or are there certain herbs out there that people can take to reduce inflammation?

MaryAnne: When it comes to herbs and supplements, you have to be careful because there are certain herbs that might be contraindicated depending on other disease processes that people may have and/or medications that they are taking. I would recommend seeing some sort of healthcare provider before going on any herbal supplement routine.

When it comes to herbs, I think of them in a food or nutrition realm instead...things like **ginger**, which has been known to reduce inflammation of the colon. Adding things like **turmeric**, which is known for its anti-inflammatory properties, to the diet to add spice your food...also **licorice and chamomile.** Things that you would look for in skincare, are also things that you can have in tea form.



Candice: Good to know. Let's wrap with a question about aging.

If our readers are experiencing chronic inflammation, is that going to accelerate the aging process at a cellular level?

MaryAnne: It absolutely does. You can look at it from a macro scale and a micro scale. From a micro scale, it leads to **destruction of tissues**, formation of scar tissues, and even potentially to the death of certain tissues. So on a micro scale, chronic inflammation would accelerate the aging process because of the effects that it has on our cells.

If there are things going on at a micro scale, that will magnify to a macro scale. It's going to **inhibit your motion and not allow you to have the most energy you could**. The thing about that is that when your motion is limited and you have decreased energy, you tend to become more sedentary. And being more sedentary has definitely been proven to accelerate the aging process.

If you're looking for vitality, energy, and that "fountain of youth", getting rid of inflammation is definitely going to help.

Candice: Well, excellent. Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge with our readers. Any last comments before we wrap up?

MaryAnne: Thank you so much for having me. I pride myself on being a resource for my community, so if anyone has any other questions, I'd say to not hesitate before reaching out to contact me. Email is probably the best for questions drma@maxperformchiro.com. Then I can take some time and get you some good answers.

Candice: Alright great, well thank you so much!

MaryAnne: You're very welcome!