

NSAIDs (*non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs*), widely used in autoimmune diseases, work through the impact they have on certain eicosanoids: they inhibit prostaglandins. By changing which oils dominate your diet, you can achieve a similar anti-inflammatory result without medication.

PROTEINS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS

When you have an unhealthy gut epithelium, also known as a *leaky gut*, eating protein-rich foods can lead to inflammation. This is because protein molecules naturally trigger immune responses. If the gut lining is compromised and lets large, partially digested protein molecules through, your immune system will react to them. This can make getting enough protein a bit tricky during treatment. That's why the foundational strategies in our 5R+ system focus on repairing the gut epithelium and restoring the population of beneficial bacteria.

Another factor that helps minimize inflammation is speeding up protein digestion. Immune reactions are mostly triggered by larger protein fragments. So, when you break down these proteins more quickly, they have less opportunity to interact with immune cells, reducing the likelihood of sensitivities. Here are a few tactics to help you do just that:

- Break down food mechanically before eating—finely chop, grind, or mill it to speed up digestion.
- Extensive heat-based cooking makes protein molecules easier to digest.
- Chew your food thoroughly to aid quicker digestion.
- Ensure your gastric acid levels and digestive processes are optimal.
- Add acidic elements like tamarind, lemon, lime juice, or vinegar to your meals to enhance protein digestion.
- Spices and herbs not only add flavor but also stimulate digestive juice production. It's best to add these after cooking so that their bioactive compounds are not destroyed by heat.

While heat-based cooking helps digest protein-rich foods, remember that most other food components, especially vegetables, are best eaten raw.

As you make progress in addressing other DILL+ factors, you'll be able to gradually increase your protein intake without the risk of inflammation.

“ **The faster protein molecules are broken down, the lower the risk of inflammation.**

See also:

- Key 1 ➤ Stomach Acid
- Key 1 ➤ Feeding your Allies

CHARACTERISTICS OF VARIOUS PROTEIN-RICH FOODS

- **Pulses** like lentils, chickpeas, and beans are often well-tolerated. Soak them overnight to remove *lectins*, which can cause digestive issues. Then, discard the soaking water, rinse thoroughly, cover them with fresh water, and cook them well. Kidney beans are particularly high in lectins. Wash them thoroughly, pre-soak overnight, and discard the soaking water. Rinse the beans, bring them to a boil, change the water, and boil again for 15–20 minutes. Then, reduce the heat and simmer for an additional 50–90 minutes. We will return to *lectins* in *Key 3*.
- **Fish** tends to be more gentle on the gut than meat, usually making it one of the better-tolerated protein sources. However, be mindful of potential chemical pollution.
- **Seeds**, such as pumpkin, sunflower, flax, chia, and sesame are great protein sources that are typically easily digested. Grinding most seeds aids digestion; a simple coffee grinder works well for this purpose.
- **Quinoa** - soak for 1–2 hours, then drain and rinse before covering with water to cook.

- **Nuts** are an excellent source of protein and other nutrients but may cause immune reactions due to compromised microbiota and gut epithelium. If this applies to you, consider temporarily cutting them out during the initial healing phase, then slowly reintroducing them later, carefully noting any reactions. Chestnuts are least likely to provoke a reaction, followed by almonds. Similar to seeds, grinding will aid the digestion of nuts.
- **Meat** choices matter: red meats are generally more problematic. Choose products from animals not treated with antibiotics or hormones. Pigs, cattle, and poultry often have the highest antibiotic and hormone levels, making lamb or goat better meat choices.
- **Dairy** should also be chosen with care and reintroduced only in the later stages. Select dairy from animals not treated with antibiotics or hormones. Goat or sheep milk is usually better tolerated, and fermented options are digested more easily than raw. Avoid all processed dairy, especially flavored and sweetened kinds. Cheese, due to its high protein concentration, is more likely to trigger reactions. Always avoid processed or moldy types of cheese as they are unhealthy for the microbiome. Fresh, naturally fermented probiotic dairy is the top pick. Check out the *Bonus* section for recipes.
- **Eggs** can trigger strong immune sensitivities, so usually, it's better to avoid them. If you want to reintroduce them later, choose eggs from animals that are not given antibiotics or hormones, just like you would with meat and dairy.
- **Soy-based** and other processed, artificial meat and dairy substitutes should be avoided. Whole-food pulses, nuts, and seeds are better vegan protein sources.
- **Shellfish** should generally be avoided due to its high potential for triggering immune reactions.

To check for food allergies, use the *Eliminate-Reintroduce-Reset* method (ERR), which will be detailed later.

To summarize, you can reduce immune reactions by mechanically breaking down and thoroughly chewing all foods. For protein-heavy foods, prolonged heat-based cooking and adding acidic elements "pre-conditions" them for faster digestion.

See also:

- Key 3 > Obstacle #4: Harmful Food Ingredients > Excessive Saponins and Lectins
- Key 1 > Chemical Additives and Toxins in Our Food > Fish Safety
- Key 3 > Eliminate-Reintroduce-Reset Technique (ERR)
- Bonus 3. Food Baskets: Foods Ranked by Their Impact on the Gut-Microbiome-Immune Ecosystem.

CARBOHYDRATES

Refined carbohydrates, such as bread and pastries, and, of course, sugar, increase inflammation in the gut. As we explore more facets of a healthy lifestyle, we will see that this rule applies to many aspects:

“ **Always avoid sugar!**

The nightshade family—including eggplants, potatoes, tomatoes, tomatillos, and all varieties of peppers—contains compounds that may trigger inflammation in those with autoimmune issues. I recommend steering clear of them during the healing phase and being cautious if reintroducing them later once the DILL+ factors have been restored.

INDIVIDUAL FOOD REACTIONS

FOOD SENSITIVITY AND ALLERGIES

About one in five Americans experience some form of food sensitivity and intolerance, where eating certain foods can trigger inflammation in the gut and other parts of the body. These conditions are often linked to a *Leaky Gut*, an unhealthy gut epithelium that allows undigested food molecules to pass through it, triggering an immune response (I will cover it in *Key 3*).

Avoiding your trigger foods can ease your symptoms but won't fix the underlying issue. The real solution is to repair the gut lining and address all the other factors of the DILL+ framework. While these repairs are underway, something that takes time, it's essential to avoid foods that trigger your sensitivities. This helps reduce inflammation and aids in restoring your digestive health and microbiome.

After restoring your gut health, a process that takes time, you can gradually reintroduce most foods into your diet—the 'Reintroduce' phase of the 5R+ system. Removing many healthy foods is usually a necessary, yet temporary step during the initial healing phase. However, you will also exclude many unhealthy foods and, hopefully, never welcome them back to your plate.

FOOD PANEL TESTS

"Food panel tests" have gained popularity lately. They check your blood for antibodies to different food ingredients to identify what you are sensitive to. However, take these tests with a big pinch of salt. Their results can be misleading, as your diet and other factors influence them.

Many reputable organizations, like the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology and the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, advise against IgG testing for diagnosing food allergies or intolerances/sensitivities due to insufficient evidence backing its effectiveness.

These tests identify antibodies to substances that have recently come into contact with immune cells due to a leaky gut, thus sensitizing them. If you eliminate this food, its antibody levels drop, suggesting you're no longer sensitive to it. And if you start eating a new food regularly, new molecules leak through the compromised gut lining, sensitizing the immune system. This is why subsequent tests often show reactions to different products.

While these tests aren't always reliable for long-term planning, they can be valuable snapshots of what to avoid today. Think of them as a temporary map for navigating your diet's immediate no-go zones, useful for kick-starting inflammation reduction during the healing phase. Don't worry if these tests are out of reach—there are empirical ways to figure out food sensitivities through the *Elimination Diet* and the *Eliminate-Reintroduce-Reset technique*, which we'll explore in a moment. This approach requires more patience but often leads to more precise insights.

ELIMINATION DIET AND AUTOIMMUNE PROTOCOL (AIP)

The *Elimination Diet*, or *Autoimmune Protocol (AIP)*, is a popular method to reduce inflammation by cutting out foods that trigger adverse immune reactions. In a nutshell, start by eliminating the usual suspects

from your diet—grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, nightshade vegetables, eggs, and dairy. If symptoms persist, remove other potential triggers until you find a diet that doesn't cause inflammation. The length of this elimination phase differs from person to person and lasts until there's a significant reduction in symptoms—typically 1 to 3 months. Autoimmune responses don't switch off as quickly as food allergies. It can take several days before you notice improvements after cutting out a problematic food.

When you stop eating food that has been causing issues, the related antibody levels in your body drop, which should improve your condition. Unfortunately, the challenge doesn't end there. Many people notice that, over time, the AIP's effectiveness can wane. This happens if the foundation—the gut lining and microbiome—are not restored. When you replace eliminated foods with new ones, the molecules from these new additions will persistently leak through the compromised gut epithelium, keeping your immune cells on high alert. This ongoing sensitization means your inflammation triggers keep changing. Over time, people often find themselves having to eliminate more and more foods or frequently switching between different options to manage their symptoms. Simply removing inflammatory foods isn't enough; the underlying disease remains unnoticed like embers waiting to flare up again at the slightest provocation. The real solution involves healing your entire inner ecosystem by tackling all DILL+ factors.

Cutting out foods that fuel inflammation is still a critical step in the 5R+ system. Without it, you cannot **Repair** the intestinal epithelium, **Rouse** gut motility, or **Repopulate** the microbiome. Though, it is neither the only step nor the final one.

There are two approaches to adopting an anti-inflammatory diet:

- The traditional *Autoimmune Protocol (AIP)*—*top-down approach*, where you start by systematically removing sensitizing foods from your current diet, searching for the culprits until you find your optimal diet.
- The *Eliminate-Reintroduce-Reset (ERR) technique*—the *bottom-up approach*, requires more willpower and commitment but can deliver quicker, more sustainable results.

ELIMINATE-REINTRODUCE-RESET TECHNIQUE (ERR)

The ERR technique (bottom-up approach) flips the Elimination Diet on its head. Think of it as a dietary reset—beginning with an ultra-minimalist menu of foods known to be harmless, then gradually introducing new items, one by one, watching closely for any adverse reactions. Here's how it works:

1. **Start at Ground Zero:** Consider starting with a gut cleansing exercise and a few days of water fasting to effectively *Eliminate* triggers and reduce inflammation.
2. **Safe First Steps:** Kick off your dietary journey with a few carefully selected, generally well-tolerated foods. Give yourself enough time to establish a baseline of reduced inflammation.
3. **One New Product at a Time:** Gradually *Reintroduce* one new food item at a time, waiting a few days to see if any adverse reactions occur before introducing another.
4. **Backtrack When Necessary:** Should symptoms flare or inflammation increase, eliminate the last food added and give your body time to *Reset*, reducing inflammation again.
5. **Continue Moving Upward:** After the *Reset* period, cautiously add another new food to your diet, assessing your body's response.

We'll detail the plan and specific foods shortly; also check the *Food Baskets* table, where foods are categorized into several groups.

This approach enables you to progress systematically in your diet, avoiding potential inflammation triggers. From my experience, the ERR technique is more efficient and delivers quicker improvements than the AIP. By reducing inflammation in the beginning, you pave the way for your body to enhance other health aspects more effectively, laying a solid foundation for overall progress. In comparison, the classic top-down approach involves moving through inflammation while simultaneously attempting to reduce it. The ERR technique

demands more self-discipline and can initially feel exasperating as you start with just a few green veggies in the early weeks.

As mentioned before, autoimmune reactions have a slow response, typically taking 6-10 days to manifest and subside. Be patient with each new food introduction, allocating sufficient time for your body to *Reset* between steps. My experience suggests that reactions during ERR unfold quicker than with AIP, with each phase lasting 2-7 days. Now, let me show you how to speed up this process even more.

See also:

- Key 4 > Flushing the Gut: Ayurvedic Shankha Prakshalana Technique Simplified
- Key 3 > Water-Fasting
- Appendix 1 > Table 4.4
- Bonus 3. Food Baskets: Foods Ranked by Their Impact on the Gut-Microbiome-Immune Ecosystem

HOW TO RESET FASTER

The Reset step eliminates problematic foods from the gut, removes lingering sensitizing molecules from the body, and stops any inflammation that's been triggered. Initially, with an inflamed immune system, responses and recovery are sluggish.

“ **The compromised immune system has a greater inertia of sickness.**

This inertia of sickness leads to delayed reactions to pathogens by an exhausted immune system and a tendency for inflammation to become chronic. Furthermore, when gut motility is slow, it takes longer to eliminate remaining food particles, extending the sensitization period. Yet, as you work on repairing the various DILL+ factors, the *Reset* process becomes faster. A healthy immune system, microbiome, and gut can regain control within a day.

Here's how to expedite the Reset phase:

Activate gut-cleansing. Eat high-fiber foods to support this process; use a *laxative* if necessary. It also helps to drink lots of water and super-