

The Mind Diet

Just like with every other area of your health, your brain benefits from a healthy diet. Researchers have discovered that eating certain foods can slow the aging of the brain and lower the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. The **MIND (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) diet** is a hybrid of the Mediterranean diet and DASH (Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension) diet that focuses on food groups in each that can boost your brainpower and protect it from age-related problems like dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Recommended guidelines focus more on plant-based foods that are minimally processed, limiting animal-based foods that are high in saturated fats and foods with added sugars, and practicing portion control. Below are the key components to the MIND diet:

Eat Lots of Vegetables

All vegetables are important but pay special attention to adding leafy green vegetables like spinach, kale, collard greens, and lettuce, which have been shown to lower the risk of dementia and cognitive decline. Set a goal to eat at least two servings of vegetables daily and six or more servings per week specifically of greens that are high in nutrients such as folate, vitamin E, carotenoids, and flavonoids.



Replace Sweets with Berries

Berries are high in flavonoids. Studies have shown that individuals who eat blueberries and strawberries have slower rates of cognitive decline. For maximum brain health, try to eat two or more servings of berries per week.

Snack on Nuts

Nuts have a high content of fat-soluble vitamin E, which is known for its brain-protective properties. Eating a handful of nuts at least 5 times per week in place of processed snacks can improve brain health.



Cook with Mostly Olive Oil

Substitute olive oil as your primary cooking oil in the place of butter or margarine. Look for "extra virgin" olive oil and skip those labeled "light." Olive oil is light sensitive, so choose a bottle that is opaque or dark glass.

Limit Red Meat

Consider substituting baked chicken and protein- and fiber-packed beans, lentils, and soybeans for red meat. Eating red meat fewer than four times per week is ideal for supporting brain health. Aim for two weekly servings of non-fried poultry and four or more weekly servings of beans and lentils.



Eat Fish Weekly

Eating fish at least once per week can improve memory. (Studies have not found any significant evidence that having fish more than once per week had any added benefits for brain health.) Choose fatty fish such as salmon, trout, mackerel, tuna, herring, and sardines.



Enjoy a Glass of Wine



Too much alcohol is bad for overall health as well as brain health, but a daily glass of red wine may lower the risk of dementia and delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease by two to three years. (Research has indicated that alcohol helps blood flow by making it less sticky and thus less prone to harmful clotting.) However, limit drinking to no more than one glass per day, and health experts do not recommend you start drinking if you currently do not drink or have family history of alcohol misuse.

While more research needs to be done on the overall benefits of the MIND diet, evidence so far shows it is a good diet strategy for your long-term health! Just remember to always consult with your healthcare provider before starting any new diet.

To learn more about how diet and nutrition may affect your brain function, contact Caterpillar Registered Dietitian **Rhonda Haller** at Haller_Rhonda_M@cat.com!

Sources: Mayo Clinic (mayoclinic.org), WebMD (webmd.com)