

Eat Right to Protect Your Brain Health



BrightFocus®
Foundation

Alzheimer's
Disease
Research

A diet high in healthy fats, fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and beans may help protect your brain health.

An unhealthy diet can promote cognitive decline and other health issues. Scientists have looked at the typical “Western diet,” which is high in fat, cholesterol, sodium, processed grains, and added sugar. A high intake of saturated and trans fats increases the body’s levels of inflammation, which can contribute to the development of dementia.

By contrast, a healthier diet can protect cognitive functioning. Here are three proven eating patterns to benefit your overall health, including your brain.

The Mediterranean diet incorporates many traditional foods from Greece, Italy, and Spain. It includes plenty of healthy fats like olive oil, fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, and nuts, and less dairy, red meat, butter or margarine, sweetened beverages, and pastries.

The DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) is similar to the Mediterranean diet, while also limiting carbohydrates and sodium. It’s been shown to reduce blood pressure, which may help people with cardiovascular disease.

The MIND diet (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) was developed specifically for brain health and has been shown to slow cognitive decline in some studies. It emphasizes whole grains, vegetables and leafy greens, berries, fish, poultry, beans, nuts, and olive oil, while minimizing red meat, butter, margarine, cheese, fast foods, and sweets. One study showed that this diet provided even better protection against Alzheimer’s disease than either the Mediterranean or DASH diets.

Food and Brain Health

HEALTHY FOODS	FOODS TO AVOID
Whole grains	Red meats
Fresh fruits	Butter
Vegetables	Margarine
Fish	Cheese
Beans	Fast foods
Nuts	Sweets
Olive oil	High-sodium foods



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