

alzheimer's association®

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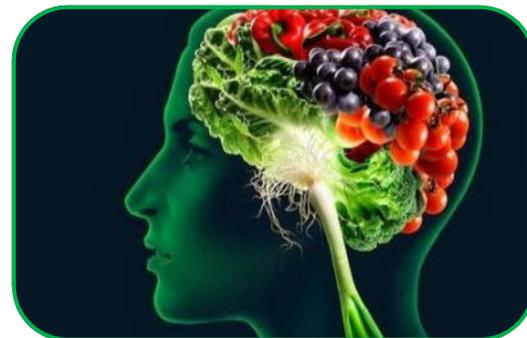
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800.272.3900www.alz.org/CaCentral**The MIND Diet; a new year resolution.***Marcy Oswald, MA. MFT Associate
Educator & Care Specialist*

For years we have heard that what you eat can affect the health of your heart. Currently there is increasing evidence that the same is true for your brain. A Rush University Medical Center research study shows that the MIND diet may **reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease by as much as 53 percent.** Even those who followed the diet moderately well reduced their risk of Alzheimer's by about one third. The MIND diet helped to slow the rate of cognitive decline and defend against Alzheimer's regardless of other risk factors, such as smoking.

The MIND diet identifies 10 brain-healthy food groups a person should eat and five unhealthy food groups to avoid. The diet combines many elements of two other popular nutrition plans that have been proven to benefit heart health: the Mediterranean diet and the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet. However, the MIND diet differs from those plans in a few significant ways and has proved to be more effective than either at reducing the risk of Alzheimer's.

The MIND diet recommends frequent servings of green leafy vegetables. Greens such as kale, spinach, broccoli, and collards are packed with vitamins A and C and other nutrients. Including greens in addition to other veggies made a difference in slower rates of decline in memory and thinking. Reviewing research, the important dietary do's seem to be **high plant consumption** and **lower fat consumption.** At least two servings a week can help, and researchers found that six or more servings a week provide the greatest brain benefits.



The MIND diet not only emphasizes leafy green vegetables but **restricts all fruit except for berries.** Healthy choices like spinach and blueberry salads work brain-saving magic because they reduce inflammation in the brain that has been strongly connected with cognitive decline. In addition, the diets' effectiveness could be related to the positive effect that a high-quality diet has on the vascular system, which in turn affects brain health.

There is considerable scientific evidence that healthy dietary patterns are associated with lower Alzheimer's risk and slower cognitive decline. The foods to avoid are foods high in saturated fat, including beef, lamb, pork, butter, cheese, and sausage.

Instead fill up with:

- High intake of vegetables, legumes, fruits, and cereals
- High intake of unsaturated fatty acids (mostly in the form of olive oil)
- Low intake of saturated fatty acids
- Moderately high intake of fish
- Low-to-moderate intake of dairy products (mostly cheese or yogurt)
- Low intake of meat and poultry
- Regular but moderate amount of ethanol, primarily in the form of wine and generally during meals.

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Tips

Eat from these 10 food groups:

1. Green leafy vegetables (like spinach and salad greens): At least six servings a week
2. Other vegetables: At least one a day
3. Nuts: Five servings a week
4. Berries: Two or more servings a week
5. Beans: At least three servings a week
6. Whole grains: Three or more servings a day
7. Fish: Once a week
8. Poultry (like chicken or turkey): Two times a week
9. Olive oil: Use it as your main cooking oil.
10. Wine: One glass a day

Avoid eating these 5:

1. Red meat: Less than four servings a week
2. Butter and margarine: Less than a tablespoon daily
3. Cheese: Less than one serving a week
4. Pastries and sweets: Less than five servings a week
5. Fried or fast food: Less than one serving a week

However, while science shows that the diets work as a whole, the benefits of smaller separate decisions—such as choosing whole grains over processed flour or cooking with olive oil—are not all or nothing. The study's results, says Maria Carrillo, chief science officer at the Alzheimer's Association, show the positive effects of improving nutrition even slightly. "Of course, you get the biggest result if you follow the diet completely, but even little changes can have a significant impact."



The MIND Diet

As with all changes in lifestyle, it is wise to first consult with your doctor.

- **Whole grains:** Eat at least three servings a day of things like whole wheat, oats, and brown rice. Processed white flour is a no-no, as are sweets and pastries.
- **Leafy green vegetables:** The MIND diet kicks the veggie requirement up a notch from the Mediterranean plan, recommending a salad plus one other vegetable every day.
- **Wine:** You may have a glass a day and it is recommended that you consume with dinner.
- **Nuts:** Your **go-to snack**. Opt for about a handful of unsalted almonds, or other varieties that are especially high in fiber, vitamins, and the omega-3 fatty acids that some have hypothesized fight the inflammation that may compromise brain health.
- **Fish:** You should eat an **omega-3-rich catch** once a week, or possibly more. The results of a separate Nordic diet, (introduced at the Alzheimer's Association conference), indicate even greater cognitive protection from a diet especially rich in fish like salmon.

- **Berries:** As with chicken, you should shoot for two servings a week; blueberries, in particular, are strongly recommended. Blueberries are high in a particular polyphenol (an antioxidant) that has been linked to a reduced risk of Alzheimer's in cardiovascular literature.

- **Olive oil:** As with the Mediterranean diet, olive oil is the approved fat. In fact, you are supposed to use less than one tablespoon of butter or margarine a day.

- **Cheese:** The MIND diet has been called a wine-and-no-cheese party. It suggests you go very light on Swiss and cheddar. Whole-fat cheese shares a spot on the unhealthy list, along with fried or fast food and sweets. You are also allowed less than one serving a week of red meat.

- **Beans:** Whether you go for kidney, chickpeas, or lima, the recommendation is to eat them every other day.

It is important to remember that high levels of antioxidants from the high intake of fruits and vegetables may help to protect against some of the damage to brain cells associated with Alzheimer's disease, as well as increasing the levels of proteins in the brain that protect brain cells from this damage. These foods minimize the inflammation in the brain that is associated with Alzheimer's disease. The MIND diet is linked to lower levels of cholesterol, which recent research has suggested may be associated with memory and thinking problems.

For most people, following the Mediterranean diet is a good way to ensure a healthy diet, which may be important for maintaining good brain function. Scientists need to do more research on the MIND approach, but it is a very promising start.

For more information please click on [AAIC 18](#) or visit the Alzheimer's Association International Conference at [alz.org](#).