



Healthy Food, Healthy Brain

There is exciting news about a diet that may reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. It's called the **MIND diet**. The diet is based on the Mediterranean and DASH diets, but it is modified to place more emphasis on specific foods that have been shown to improve or maintain cognitive function.

The MIND research was done by Rush University and funded by the National Institute on Aging. The study followed 923 individuals aged 58 to 98 for an average of 4.5 years. Among study participants who closely followed any of the three diets—Mediterranean, DASH and MIND—there was a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. The Mediterranean diet had the greatest impact with a 54 percent reduction among the top one-third of people who most closely followed

the diet, and the MIND diet was a close second at 53 percent reduction.

However, according to the lead scientist for the study, the MIND diet was the most effective overall. It brought about significant reduction in dementia risk even among people who moderately followed the diet during the study.

What foods are in the MIND diet?

The MIND diet emphasizes foods shown to support a healthy brain. The more closely the recommendations are followed, the greater the impact is likely to be.

For more information on MIND, go to www.rush.edu/news/diet-may-help-prevent-alzheimers



Include these foods

- **Green leafy vegetables:** every day
- **Other vegetables:** at least once per day
- **Nuts:** every day
- **Berries:** at least twice per week
- **Beans:** every other day
- **Whole grains:** three times per day
- **Fish:** at least once per week
- **Poultry:** at least twice per week
- **Olive oil**

Limit these foods

- **Red meats**
- **Butter and stick margarine:** less than 1 tablespoon per day
- **Cheese:** less than one serving per week
- **Pastries and sweets:** limit
- **Fried or fast food:** less than one serving per week

Reducing Alzheimer's risk by 53 percent is equivalent to adding 7.5 years to one's brainspan.



Color Me Blue with Blueberries

When you hear the phrase, “Color me blue,” do you think of depression or sadness? Now you can feel good about the color blue—especially blueberries. Research has linked blueberries to better blood pressure and brain health.

Compounds in blueberries seem to jump-start the brain in ways that get aging neurons to communicate better.

According to scientists at Tufts’ research labs, blueberries and other **blue** and **purple** fruits are brimming with anthocyanins, which give them their distinctive color. In addition to their now well-known antioxidant effects, scientists have discovered that these colorful plant chemicals can cross the blood-brain barrier and directly affect the brain.

Winter Blues

Stock up on frozen blueberries during the winter. Research has shown that frozen blueberries retain most of their anthocyanin content. (Cooking at temperatures above 350 degrees damages these plant chemicals, however, so don’t rely solely on blueberry muffins.)

Try this: Toss frozen (or fresh when price is right) blueberries with mixed greens for a more colorful and nutritious salad.

Berries were the only fruit specifically included in the MIND diet study. According to a lead scientist for the study, blueberries are one of the more potent foods in terms of protecting the brain, and strawberries have also performed well in past studies of the effect of food on cognitive function.

Anthocyanins are most abundant in berries (e.g., blueberries, strawberries, black currants, elderberries,) and their juices, and in red and purple grapes, red wine, tart cherries, eggplants, black plums, blood oranges and red cabbage.



MIND Diet Tips to Help Protect Your Brain and Your Budget

Eat frozen berries instead of fresh.

Add frozen berries to salads, smoothies or yogurt, muffins or whole wheat pancakes, or toss them into hot oatmeal.

Use canned or dried beans.

Canned beans are cheap and filling. Keep a variety on hand—add lentils, red and white beans or chickpeas to your shopping list.

Buy chicken legs and thighs.

The MIND diet pattern includes two servings of poultry each week. These cuts are similar in nutritional content to chicken breasts but are cheaper.

Look for deals on nuts.

Nuts can put a dent in your food budget so keep your eyes peeled for deals. The amount you need is just 1 ounce—2 to 5 times per week—and 1 ounce is only 20 almonds, 17 cashews and 14 walnuts.

Look for cheaper varieties of fish.

Don't let the price of fresh fish scare you. Check out canned and foil-packed fish. Look for frozen fillets and ask about sales at the meat counter. You don't need a big piece!

Don't worry if you can't follow the diet exactly.

In the MIND study, even those who followed the diet moderately reduced their risk of developing Alzheimer's by 35 percent. If money is tight, focus on what you can achieve, rather than on what you can't.

Adapted from [MIND diet on a budget](#).

Save money!
You only need a few
ounces of nuts per
week. →



Testimonial

Rita Lee attends monthly *Fresh Conversations* meetings and exercises twice a week at the Clear Lake Senior Center.

Rita Lee has a contagious smile when she talks about *Fresh Conversations*. "I love the program—I've learned a lot!"

About 2 years ago, Rita worked part-time as a housekeeper at a hotel. One day, she was not feeling well and 6 days later had triple bypass surgery. Although heart issues run in her family, "I wasn't ignorant; I was just in denial," she admits.

Rita grew up in a large family and always had work to do. "Meals were not always most important," she explains.

Now, she focuses on eating well but doesn't count calories. She limits carbs to control her type 2 diabetes and tries to cook three times a week.

Rita is passionate about nutrition and shares her favorite tips with family, but she hasn't quite influenced her son-in-law yet (she says with another smile).

Answers to Get in the MINDset (page 4)
To follow the MIND diet pattern, eat at least three servings of whole grains, a salad and one other vegetable every day, beans every other day or so, poultry and berries at least twice a week and fish at least once a week. Limit less healthy foods, especially butter (less than 1 tablespoon a day), cheese, and fried or fast food (less than a serving a week for any of the three). Snack most days on small amounts of nuts.



Scientists agree. Singing is really good for you—especially group singing.

Singing in the Brain

When we sing, our brain cells connect in unique ways. Singing fires up the right temporal lobe of our brain, releasing chemicals that can make us happier, more creative and less lonely.

Studies have shown that when we sing with other people these positive effects are amplified. And don't worry. They found you don't have to be a "good" singer to benefit.

If you can talk, you can sing. All together now!

Sources:
<https://upliftconnect.com/neuroscience-of-singing/>
<http://ideas.time.com/2013/08/16/singing-changes-your-brain/>

Take Action Corner

This month I will...

Get in the MINDset

Fill in the blanks to complete these helpful tips for following the MIND diet.

- | | | |
|-----------|-------|-----------|
| butter | nuts | every day |
| berries | three | salad |
| once | whole | fried |
| fast food | beans | |

To follow the MIND diet pattern, eat at least

_____ servings of _____ grains,

a _____ and one other vegetable

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poultry and _____ at least twice a week and

fish at least _____ a week. Limit less

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a serving a week for any of the three). Snack most

days on small amounts of _____.

Newsletter sources:
https://www.nutritionletter.tufts.edu/issues/14_6/current-articles/MIND-Diet-for-Better-Brain-Aging_2413-1.html?ET=tuftshealthletter:e29679:2399983a:&st=email&s=p_WeeklyUpdate052918

https://www.nutritionletter.tufts.edu/issues/10_16/current-articles/Blueberries-Good-for-Your-Blood-Pressure-and-Brain_1690-1.html

Thalheimer, J. (2017, December). "Nutrients for a Sharp Memory." *Today's Dietitian*, vol. 10, no. 12, p. 24.