

Fighting Dementia with Food: MIND and Mediterranean Diets

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Our hungriest organ is our brain. It needs energy, antioxidants and healthy fats. Our brain has a high metabolism and uses up nutrients quickly. In fact, it uses more than 20% of daily calories. Its main energy source is glucose. Nutrition and healthy eating is so important to maintaining a healthy brain and reducing the onset of Dementia.

Dementia is not a disease but a set of symptoms including: Loss of memory, difficulty in finding the right words or understand what people are saying, difficulty in performing previously routines tasks, personality and mood changes. Dementia is the leading cause of disability and dependency among older people worldwide. It has been noted that someone in the world develops dementia every 3 seconds.

Age is the strongest know risk factor for dementia but it is not inevitable consequence of aging. Ways to reduce risk of dementia risk include:

- ✓ Getting regular exercise
- ✓ Not smoking
- ✓ Avoiding harmful use of alcohol
- ✓ Controlling weight
- ✓ Maintaining healthy blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels
- ✓ Eating a healthy diet

Research suggest that strategies for overall healthy aging may help keep the brain healthy and even reduce the risk of developing dementia. These measure include eating a healthy diet, staying socially active, avoiding tobacco use and excess alcohol, and exercising both body and mind. Let's focus on the healthy eating.

Researchers are finding that old saying is so true, "What's good for the heart may also be good for the brain." 2 diets that seem to go hand in hand with this thought process are The Mediterranean Diet and the MIND diet.

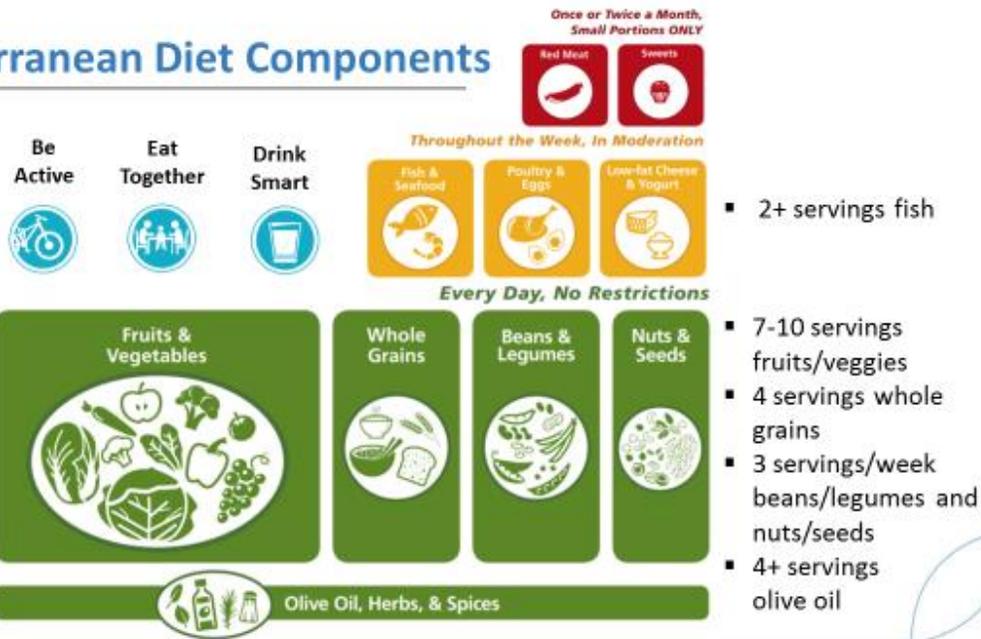
Mediterranean Diet: Way of eating based on the traditional cuisine of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Associated with lower risk of major chronic diseases, reduce rates of cardiovascular and cerebrovascular events, plus a longer life expectancy. While there is no single definition of the 'Mediterranean Diet' it is typically high in vegetables, fruits, whole grains beans, nuts and seeds, and olive oil.

The Mediterranean Diet uses olive oil as a main fat, high in fish and includes wine with meals. Health benefits include lowering the risk of; Heart Disease, Stroke, Cancer, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Diabetes, Metabolic Syndrome and Obesity. The Mediterranean Diet has been ranked #1 in "Best Diets Overall" by US News & World Report for the last three years.

Ways to implement this Diet:

- Switch up pasta and rice with ancient grains like couscous, quinoa and farro –these can even be purchased frozen and cook up in minutes.
- Gradually transition away from butter and substitute with olive oil – start with cooking, then move to using with bread.
- Look for seasonal produce, visit farmer's markets for variety.
- Use fresh herbs like dill, basil, parsley, mint, oregano for added flavor and nutrition.
- Remember daily activity is the base of the pyramid, even if that means housework.

Mediterranean Diet Components



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Let's take a look at the MIND Diet. This is a healthy, evidence-based way to eat that is designed to help prevent Alzheimer's disease and delay cognitive decline. Two key MIND diet studies show how the diet keeps the aging brain 7.5 years younger and reduces the risk of developing Alzheimer's by 53%. This diet was developed by researchers at Rush and Harvard in 2015.

The MIND diet stands for Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay. This diet combines principles from two other well-known diets: the Mediterranean diet and the DASH diet.

MIND diet components:

Consume These 10 Brain-Healthy Foods

Whole grains	Veggies in general	Green leafy veggies	Nuts	Beans	Berries	Poultry	Fish	Olive oil	Wine
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Avoid These 5 Brain-Harming Foods

Butter and stick margarine	Whole fat cheese	Fried fast foods	Red meat	Pastries and sweets
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MIND diet verses the Mediterranean diet:

- Less demanding
- Fewer required servings of fish, grains, fruit, veggies
 - ✓ MIND recommends fish once per week
- No emphasis on dairy (limiting only cheese and butter)
- No limits on total fat
- Doesn't have a fruit recommendation other than berries (like blueberries raspberries, strawberries, blackberries)
 - ✓ MD recommends 3-4 servings/day
- Specifically recommends green leafy veggies (as well as other veggies)

MIND Diet 15-Point Scoring

	MIND Component	Target Servings per Week
 BRAIN-HEALTHY	Whole Grains	21 (3 per day)
	Other Vegetables	7 (1 per day)
	Leafy Greens	6
	Nuts	5
	Beans	3
	Berries	2
	Poultry	2
	Fish	1
	Wine	7 (1 per day)
	Olive Oil	7 (1 per day)
 BRAIN-HARMING	Butter	< 7 Tablespoons
	Pastries, Baked Goods, Sweets	< 5
	Red Meat	< 4
	Cheese	< 1
	Fried/Fast Food	< 1

10 creative ways to use MIND diet foods:

1. Black bean brownies
2. Leafy green smoothies
3. Savory breakfast oatmeal
4. Grilled berries with lemon zest and balsamic vinegar
5. Silken tofu used in smoothies and soups
6. Pop sorghum like popcorn
7. Cauliflower rice
8. Fish for breakfast with mashed anchovies in EVOO + diced tomatoes on toast
9. Veggies in place of pasta
10. Nut butters added to smoothies and oatmeal

The Bottom Line is:

There is much research still to be done when it comes to diet and brain health - but we do know diet is an important lifestyle factor when it comes to reducing risk for many chronic diseases, including Alzheimer's.

Research supports the use of the Mediterranean and MIND diets for longevity and healthy aging.

Bon Appetit to your health!

If you or a loved one is thinking about retirement living, Brookdale has the capacity to support them at this time. Please contact Diane Reier @ 224-531-0230 or Dreier1@Brookdale.com.

We would love them to call Brookdale their new home!

