

Alzheimer's & Diet

Fact Sheet



What is Alzheimer's Disease ?

Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia, a general term for memory loss and other cognitive abilities serious enough to interfere with daily life. Alzheimer's disease (AD) accounts for 60-80% of dementia cases.

Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. It's the result of complex changes in the brain that start years before symptoms appear and lead to the loss of brain cells and their connections.

Risk Factors for Alzheimer's

- Age (more common in those 65 or older)
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- High blood sugar (diabetes)
- Being overweight or obese
- Smoking
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Being physically inactive
- Being socially isolated
- Depression

Genetics and Alzheimer's

Early-Onset Alzheimer's: This type affects people younger than 65 and is believed to be influenced significantly by genetics. However, it's relatively rare, accounting for only 6-7% of all dementia cases.

Late-Onset Dementia: Unlike early-onset dementia, late-onset dementia is less directly linked to specific genes. It's believed to develop due to a combination of genetics and other factors like diabetes and high blood pressure. The APOE allele, which plays a role in cholesterol transport and beta-amyloid formation, may contribute to late-onset dementia. It's more common in women than in men, suggesting that women might have a slightly

higher risk. However, not everyone with this genetic factor will develop dementia, and not everyone with dementia has this genetic component.

While genetics can play a role in Alzheimer's risk, lifestyle factors are extremely important. Emerging research suggests that dietary choices can also influence the risk and progression of AD.

Evidence-Based Eating for Alzheimer's Prevention

Researchers have been increasingly studying the role of dietary and lifestyle factors in AD and have found brain health to be improved by plant-predominant diets. What these diets have in common is that they limit sugar and saturated fat intake and recommend eating a high percentage of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts and consuming minimal amounts of red or processed meat. Several medical organizations have recommended a plant-based diet to optimize cognitive health and potentially prevent dementia.

How a Plant-Based Diet May Reduce Alzheimer's Risk

Antioxidant- Rich and Anti Inflammatory Foods

Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables can reduce dementia risk and slow down cognitive decline in older adults. The phytochemicals, vitamins, minerals, and fiber found in fruits and vegetables have well-established anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, which may protect the brain by reducing the pathological processes associated with aging and dementia. Vitamin E, found abundantly in nuts and seeds, has been shown to have neuroprotective properties. Additionally, magnesium, found in leafy greens, and zinc, found in beans and seeds, also play a role in brain health.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3 fatty acids are critical for brain health and are the foundation of cell membrane function. Should you get them fish? Animal meats, including fish, act as 'bio-magnifiers'. This means they tend to accumulate industrial chemicals and toxins as they move up the food chain. Omega-3s, particularly DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), play a role in maintaining brain health. In order to get direct DHA, you don't have to eat fish. We can get our DHA from plant-based sources such as flaxseeds, chia seeds, and walnuts.

Reduced Intake of Saturated Fat

Whole food, plant-based diets are generally low in saturated fat. High intake of saturated fat, commonly found in animal products and processed tropical oils, has been linked to cognitive decline. Meat, including lean poultry, has saturated fat in its cellular structure.

Meat is also high in choline and carnitine, leading to the formation of TMAO and IGF-1, which have been associated with heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and Alzheimer's.

While more research is needed to draw definitive conclusions, the available evidence suggests that a plant-based diet may offer protective benefits against the onset and progression of Alzheimer's Disease. Incorporating a variety of whole foods, rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and essential fatty acids, can be a proactive step toward cognitive well-being. Adopting a plant-based diet is one part of a brain-healthy lifestyle. Regular physical activity, mental stimulation, and social engagement also play crucial roles in maintaining cognitive function and reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Dr. Dean Sherzai and Dr. Ayesha Sherzai have meticulously explored the nexus between nutrition and brain health. Among their notable contributions is the identification of "The Neuro 9" – a collection of nine foods recognized for their potent ability to promote brain healing and enhance connectivity between neurons. These foods have been selected based on their ranking on the anti-inflammatory index and substantiated by extensive epidemiological studies affirming their benefits for brain health.

NEURO 9

Daily foods that promote brain health



Meal Suggestions For Brain Health

Breakfast

- ★ Oatmeal topped with mixed berries, sliced bananas, and chopped walnuts
- ★ Blueberry smoothie with unsweetened soy milk
- ★ Whole grain toast with avocado, sprouts, tomatoes, and herbs

Lunch

- ★ Buddha bowl with greens, quinoa, tofu, vegetables, tahini dressing
- ★ Sweet Potato Bean Burger on whole grain bun
- ★ Hearty bean chili served with sourdough bread
- ★ Chickpea salad with mixed greens, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, and balsamic vinaigrette

Dinner

- ★ Cauliflower crust veg pizza with almond ricotta
- ★ Saffron Rice Curried Lentil Bowl
- ★ Superfood pasta with portobellos
- ★ Sushi Bowl with tempeh, veggies, and cashew ginger dressing

Snacks

- ★ Berry nice cream
- ★ Strawberry chia pudding
- ★ Kale chips
- ★ Trail mix of nuts, seeds, dried fruit

Beverages

- ★ Water infused with fruit/cucumbers/herbs
- ★ Green tea
- ★ Unsweetened plant-based milks



Please consult with a healthcare professional or registered dietitian for personalized advice on adopting a plant-based diet for Alzheimer's prevention.

References

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