



SIU MEDICINE

DALE & DEBORAH SMITH CENTER
FOR ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH
& TREATMENT

DIET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEALTHY BRAIN AGING

Healthy eating is always important, but particularly for those with dementia. Changes in diet can help deter poor nourishment, low blood pressure, or other issues. Keeping consistent routines and healthy foods that they expect can make someone feel more comfortable when they know what to expect.

HEALTHY BODY, HEALTHY BRAIN

There are healthy options beyond fruits and veggies — find whole foods that are nutrient dense. Red meat and cheese can provide benefits in moderation, but research suggests that ultraprocessed foods, including soft drinks, chips, candy, hot dogs, fried or fast food, etc., are not just harmful for the body, but for an aging brain.

Brain healthy food groups

- Green leafy vegetables
- Other vegetables
- Nuts & berries
- Whole grains
- Fish
- Poultry
- Olive Oil

Beneficial in moderation

- Red meats
- Cheese

Unhealthy food groups

- Ultraprocessed foods, including: soft drinks, chips, fried or fast food, etc.



We're here to help

From health and wellness, managing changes, educating family and friends and more, explore our online resource guide for caregivers.

Visit siumed.edu/alzresource or scan the QR code below.



MORE THAN WHAT'S ON THE TABLE

Even if you're serving someone's favorite meal, that doesn't mean things run more smoothly. Mealtimes can take up more and more time as Alzheimer's progresses. Try these tips:

- Make the eating area quiet. Turn off the TV and radio.
- Don't rush. Be patient and give the person enough time to finish the meal.
- Offer just one food at a time instead of filling the plate with options.
- Cut food into small pieces and soft enough to eat.



Don't rush Wait, then serve

Meals may take longer for those with dementia. They may not like the food, the surrounding area, feel rushed or don't want extra help.

Don't rush the person to start or to finish their meal. Look for clues in their body language to see what's irritating, and wait before offering additional food.



Hydrate Wonder water

Water intake is as important as what's on your plate. Dehydration can worsen confusion, and increase urinary tract infections and constipation. Other kinds of fluids can help provide balance — tea, smoothies, soups — but drinking eight, 8 oz glasses of water each day is important.

THE MIND DIET

A hybrid of the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets, the MIND diet emphasizes natural plant-based foods and limits intake of animal foods and saturated fats:

1. Eat a salad and one other vegetable a day & at least 3 servings of whole grains per day
2. Eat berries at least twice per week
3. Eat your choice of fatty fish once a week
4. Snack on nuts most days and eat beans/lentils every other day
5. Eat poultry at least twice per week
6. One 6oz glass of red or white wine per day*

*Important note: For older adults with memory loss, alcohol consumption is discouraged.

Researchers at Rush University found that not only did following the diet lower risk of Alzheimer's by more than 50 percent, but it also helped reduce risk of hypertension, heart attack and stroke.

THE FINGER STUDY DIET

The FINGER (Finnish Geriatric Intervention) Study diet can help prevent cognitive impairment and disability. The large-scale study combined a diet plan with a personalized exercise program, cognitive training, and regular health screenings.

1. High consumption of fruits and vegetables
2. Whole grain cereal products
3. Low fat milk products
4. Lean meat
5. Eat less than 50 grams of sugar per day
6. Use vegetable margarine and grapeseed oil instead of butter
7. Eat at least two portions of fish per week
8. Fish oil supplements for those not eating fatty fish
9. Vitamin D supplementation (10-20µg/day)