

# DOOR STEP NUTRITION



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## The MIND Diet: 10 Foods to Feed Your Brain

Over 5 million individuals in the United States are living with Alzheimer's disease, and as the population ages, the number is expected to grow. While the disease can strike as early as the 30s, most who are diagnosed are over the age of 65, and the risk increases with age. Nearly two thirds of those with Alzheimer's are women.

While there is no known cure for the disease, researchers have identified several lifestyle factors, including diet and exercise, which appear to affect not only the risk of developing Alzheimer's, but also the progression of the disease. A recently published study called Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay (MIND) determined that following an eating pattern that has components of the DASH and Mediterranean diets could reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease by 53%. Also encouraging is their finding that even for those with just moderate adherence to the diet, the reduction in risk is still 35%.

Both the DASH and Mediterranean diets are rich in plant foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, as well as healthy fats. The MIND study identified ten food groups that appear to be beneficial to brain health, and five others that are harmful to the brain, but the guidelines for the MIND diet are fairly general. With the exception of berries, which the research identified as a very potent brain-protecting fruit, regular consumption of any types of leafy green or other vegetables, all types of nuts, and any whole grains reduced the risk of Alzheimer's, as did eating any type

of fish or poultry. The length of time the MIND diet is followed also appears to be important. Those who ate the brain-healthy foods for longer periods of time appeared to have the most benefit.

### The 10 beneficial MIND food groups

- Beans
- Berries (especially blueberries and strawberries)
- Fish
- Green, leafy vegetables (spinach, kale, arugula, Swiss chard, etc)
- Nuts
- Olive oil
- Other vegetables (carrots, broccoli, green beans, cauliflower, etc)
- Poultry
- Whole grains (brown rice, quinoa, oats, etc)
- Wine

### The 5 food groups to limit or avoid

- Butter and stick margarine
- Cheese
- Fried or fast food
- Pastries and sweets
- Red meats

### Tips to incorporate the diet

The MIND diet is more about a consistent eating pattern rather than eating specific foods and quantities each day. Researchers identified the following dietary patterns in those with the lowest risk:

- At least three servings of whole grains a day (eg, oats, 100% whole-wheat bread, brown rice, or quinoa)
- A salad and one other vegetable a day
- A glass of wine a day
- A serving of nuts a day (usually as a snack)
- Beans every other day
- Poultry and berries at least twice a week
- Fish at least once a week

Contributed by Anne Danahy, MS, RDN. References available upon request.

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*Please note that the information contained in this newsletter is to provide readers with health and diet information, but is not intended to be used as medical advice for individual health problems.*