

More evidence suggests eating omega 3s and avoiding meat, dairy linked to preserving memory

April 29 2013

The largest study to date finds that eating foods that contain omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish, chicken and salad dressing and avoiding saturated fats, meat and dairy foods may be linked to preserving memory and thinking abilities. However, the same association was not found in people with diabetes. The research is published in the April 30, 2013, print issue of *Neurology*.

"Since there are no definitive treatments for most dementing illnesses, modifiable activities, such as diet, that may delay the onset of symptoms of dementia are very important," said Georgios Tsivgoulis, MD, with the University of Alabama at Birmingham and the University of Athens, Greece. Tsivgoulis is also a member of the American Academy of Neurology.

Data came from the REasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) study, a national sample of the general population. For the study, [dietary information](#) from 17,478 African-American and Caucasian people with an average age of 64 was reviewed to see how closely they adhered to a Mediterranean diet. They were also given tests that measured memory and thinking abilities over an average of four years. A total of 17 percent of the participants had diabetes. Seven percent of the participants developed impairments in their thinking and [memory skills](#) during the study.

The study found that in healthy people, those who more closely followed the Mediterranean diet were 19 percent less likely to develop problems with their thinking and memory skills. There was not a significant difference in declines between African-Americans and Caucasians. However, the [Mediterranean diet](#) was not associated with a lower risk of thinking and [memory problems](#) in people with diabetes.

"Diet is an important modifiable activity that could help in preserving cognitive functioning in late life," said Tsivgoulis. "However, it is only one of several important lifestyle activities that might play a role in late-life mental functioning. Exercise, avoiding obesity, not smoking cigarettes and taking medications for conditions like diabetes and hypertension are also important."

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

Citation: More evidence suggests eating omega 3s and avoiding meat, dairy linked to preserving memory (2013, April 29) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-04-evidence-omega-3s-meat-dairy.html>

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