

Healthy living linked to higher brain function, delay of dementia

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It's tempting to dip into the leftover Halloween treats, but new research out of York University has found eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, combined with regular exercise, leads to better cognitive functioning for younger and older adults, and may delay the onset of dementia.

York U post-doctoral fellow Alina Cohen and her team, including Professors Chris I. Arden and Joseph Baker, looked at cross-sectional data of 45,522 participants, age 30 to 80+, from the 2012 annual component of the Canadian Community Health Survey.

What they found was that for those who are normal weight or overweight, but not obese, eating more than 10 servings of fruit and vegetable daily was linked to better cognitive functioning. When moderate exercise was added, those eating less than five servings, reported better cognitive functioning.

Higher levels of [physical activity](#) were linked to the relationship between higher daily fruit and vegetable consumption and better cognitive performance. Those with higher body mass indexes, low activity levels and fruit and [vegetable consumption](#) were associated with poorer [cognitive functioning](#).

"Factors such as adhering to a healthy lifestyle including a diet that is rich in essential nutrients, [regular exercise](#) engagement, and having an adequate cardiovascular profile all seem to be effective ways by which to preserve cognitive function and delay [cognitive decline](#)," said Cohen.

With rising rates of inactivity and obesity, the researchers wanted to know if there was a relationship between clusters of risk factors for cognitive decline, and how lifestyle factors might help prevent or delay it. Few studies have looked at the relationship between physical activity and eating fruit and vegetables and the effect it has on the brain for both younger and [older adults](#).

"It is pertinent that we develop a better understanding of the lifelong behaviours that may contribute to cognitive decline in late life by implementing a life-span approach whereby younger, middle-aged, and older adults are collectively studied, and where lifestyle risk factors are evaluated prior to a diagnosis of dementia," said Cohen.

The paper, "Physical Activity Mediates the Relationship between Fruit and Vegetable Consumption and Cognitive Functioning: A Cross-Sectional Analysis," was published today in the *Journal of Public Health*, Oxford University Press.

More information: *Journal of Public Health*, [DOI: 10.1093/pubmed/fdw113](#)

Provided by York University

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