


Baycrest creates first Canadian Brain Health Food Guide for adults

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Simple diet changes have a powerful effect on brain health

The Brain Health Food Guide is for adults who want to retain cognitive function and brain health as they age. The guide is based on studies of adults 50 years of age and older who changed their diet and found these benefits:


- After four months of eating well, they performed as if they were nine years younger on tests of reading and writing speed¹
- After four years of eating well, they did not experience any memory loss²


Dietary patterns similar to the Brain Health Food Guide are associated with:

- 36 percent lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease³
- 27 percent lower risk of developing mild cognitive impairment or pre-dementia³

With a nutritious variety of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, beans, fish, nuts and low-fat dairy products, the Brain Health Food Guide offers the same eating plan that's recommended to prevent or treat heart disease, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and other conditions.

Consult with your health care provider to help you adapt these recommendations to meet your specific needs.





Eating for brain health is all about...

- Embracing balance, moderation and variety (see back for guide)
- Focusing on an overall pattern of healthy eating, not one one specific "superfood" for brain health
- Making sure you eat until you are comfortably full and not stuffed
- Enjoying lots of vegetables and fruit
- Eating raw leafy vegetables daily, including lettuce, kale and spinach
- Eating fish, beans, and nuts several times a week
- Including healthy fats in the diet, from olive oil, nuts and fish
- Limiting red and processed meat
- Selecting low-fat dairy products, such as milk and yogurt
- Choosing whole grains over refined grains e.g. white bread

Resources

Recipes & Healthy Eating
Dietitians of Canada
www.cookspiration.com


Heart & Stroke Foundation
www.heartandstroke.com

Canadian Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.ca/diabetes-and-you/recipes

EatRight Ontario
www.eatrightontario.ca

HealthLink BC
www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyteating

Preventing Dementia
Alzheimer Society of Canada
www.alzheimer.ca/en/living-widely/dementia/brainbooster




- **Choose colour.** Include colourful fruits and vegetables at each meal
- **Grill, steam and bake** foods instead of deep frying
- **Stock your kitchen** with a variety of dried or canned beans, frozen or canned fish, frozen vegetables and fruits
- **Add beans or legumes** to soups, stews and stir-fries
- **Snack smart.** Reach for nuts, fresh fruit, cut up vegetables and low fat yogurt
- **Keep hydrated.** Drink water or unsweetened beverages


Developed by: Dr. Matthew Parrott in collaboration with members of the Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging: Team 6: Nutrition, Exercise and Lifestyle

Team 6 Member Organizations:
Baycrest Health Sciences, Concordia University, Institut Universitaire de Gériatrie de Montréal, Centre de recherche du Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal, McGill University, Rotman Research Institute, Ryerson University, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Toronto Rehab/UMH Cardiovascular Rehabilitation Program, Université de Montréal, Université de Sherbrooke, University Health Network, University of British Columbia, University of Ottawa, University of Toronto, Waterloo University

Supporting Evidence:
1. Smith PJ, Elumalai, JA, Babayak MA, et al. Effects of the dietary approaches to stop hypertension diet, exercise, and calorie restriction on neurocognition in overweight adults with high blood pressure. *Hypertension*. 2010;55:1321-1328.
2. Valle Probst C, Sisti V, A. Sisti M, et al. Mediterranean diet and age-related cognitive decline: a randomized trial. *JAMA Internal Medicine*. 2015;175(7):1044-1100.
3. Singh B, Prasad M, Mello MM, et al. Association of Mediterranean diet with mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Alzheimers Dis*. 2014;38(2):271-282.



Which Foods Help the Brain?



BRAIN HEALTH FOOD GUIDE

An Evidence-Based Approach to Healthy Eating for the Aging Brain

The Brain Health Food Guide published by Baycrest. Credit: Baycrest Health Sciences


Baycrest scientists have led the development of the first Canadian Brain Health Food Guide to help adults over 50 preserve their thinking and memory skills as they age.

"There is increasing evidence in scientific literature that [healthy eating](#) is associated with retention of cognitive function, but there is also a lot of misinformation out there," says Dr. Carol Greenwood, co-author of the Brain Health Food Guide, senior scientist at Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute (RRI) and professor at the University of Toronto's Department of Nutritional Sciences.

There is not a lot of evidence about individual foods, but rather classes of foods, says Dr. Greenwood, who is also a co-author of Mindfull, the first science-based cookbook for the brain. Older adults are encouraged to eat berries or cruciferous vegetables, such as cauliflower, cabbage and Brussels sprouts, rather than a specific type of berry or vegetable.

The easy-to-read [food guide](#), co-authored with Dr. Matthew Parrott, a former RRI post-doctoral fellow, in collaboration with nutritionists involved with the Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging (CCNA), provides the best advice based on current evidence.

Research has found that dietary patterns similar to those outlined in the Brain Health Food Guide are associated with decreasing the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease by 36 per cent and mild cognitive impairment (a condition likely to develop into Alzheimer's) by 27 per cent.



Foods to Include	Servings	Serving Size
Vegetables Total	5 or more times a day	
Of this, be sure to include: Raw Leafy Greens (e.g. lettuce, spinach, mixed greens, kale, cabbage)	1 time a day	1/2 cup except 1 cup for Raw Leafy Greens
Cruciferous Vegetables (e.g. broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale, cabbage, bok choy)	3 times a week	
Fruit Total	4 or more times a day	1 medium fruit or 1/2 cup
Of this, be sure to include: Berries (fresh or frozen)	3 times a week	
Unsalted Nuts or All-natural Nut Butters Total (e.g. almond butter, peanut butter)	1 time a day	1/4 cup nuts or 2 tbsp nut butter
Of this, be sure to include: Walnuts	4 or more times a week	
Beans or Legumes (e.g. chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils, navy beans)	2 or more times a week	1/2 cup
Fish or Seafood Total (not battered or fried)	3 times a week	
Of this, be sure to include: Fatty fish (e.g. salmon, trout, sardines)	1 or more times a week	3-4oz

- Choose whole grains (e.g. oats, brown rice, brown pasta, 100% whole wheat or whole grain breads, quinoa, bulgur, barley, whole grain pasta) instead of refined grains (e.g. white rice, white pasta, white bread)
- Use low-fat milk (skim or 1%), yogurt (0-2%), and cheese (about 22%)
- Use extra-virgin olive oil as your main culinary oil for cooking, salad dressings, and added to bread and foods



Foods to Limit	Servings	Serving Size
Any Meat and Poultry Total No more than 1 meal per day should include meat or poultry	1 or less per day	
Of this, be sure to limit: Red and processed meats (e.g. beef, pork, lamb, liver, sausages, hot dogs, jerky, cold cuts, pepperoni)	less than 1 per week	3-4oz
Butter, cream, or high fat dairy spreads (e.g. sour cream, cream cheese)	less than 1 per week	1tsp butter 1tbsp cream
White breads (e.g. bread, rolls, bagels, pita, tortilla)	1 or less per week	1 slice bread 1/2 bagel
Pre-packaged foods and meals (e.g. canned soup, instant noodles, frozen appetizers, and entrees)		
Potato chips, fries, pretzels, or other salty snacks or fried food		3 or less servings per week in total for all these foods
Store-bought dairy desserts (e.g. ice cream, frozen yogurt, pudding, custard)		
Baked goods (especially store bought) (e.g. cookies, muffins, scones, croissants, donuts, cakes, pies)		Serving sizes according to the Nutrition Facts table on the food label
Candy and chocolate		
Pop, sweetened fruit juice or any other sugary drink		

The Brain Health Food Guide published by Baycrest (page 2) Credit: Baycrest Health Sciences

Some tips suggested by the Brain Health Food Guide include:

- Focus on an overall pattern of healthy eating, not one specific "superfood" for brain health
- Eat fish, beans and nuts several times a week
- Include healthy fats from olive oil, nuts and fish in one's diet
- Add beans or legumes to soups, stews and stir-fried foods
- Embrace balance, moderation and variety

"The Brain Health Food Guide ties day-to-day diet advice with the best available research evidence on promoting brain health to [older adults](#)," says Dr. Susan Vandermorris, a clinical neuropsychologist and lead of

the Memory and Aging Program at Baycrest, a brain health workshop for healthy older adults who are concerned about memory loss. "This guide is a perfect fit for our clients seeking to proactively manage their [brain health](#) through healthy nutrition."

Provided by Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care

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