

AAIC: Mediterranean diet may help preserve cognitive function

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(HealthDay)—Eating right may help protect brain health in old age, a

group of new studies show. The research was scheduled for presentation at the annual Alzheimer's Association International Conference, held from July 16 to 20 in London.

In particular, the Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay (MIND) diet lowered people's risk of dementia, two studies concluded. The MIND diet is a hybrid of the Mediterranean diet and the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets, both of which were originally designed to help improve heart health. Seniors who carefully followed the MIND diet had a 35 percent lower risk of declining cognitive function as they aged. Even people who only moderately adhered to a MIND diet reduced their risk of [cognitive decline](#) between 18 to 24 percent.

The other two studies presented at the Alzheimer's Association meeting also focused on the [cognitive effects](#) of nutrition: A Swedish study of 2,223 people found that those eating a healthy diet called the Nordic Prudent Dietary Pattern over six years had better cognitive status. This diet calls for people to limit their intake of root vegetables (potatoes, carrots), refined grains, butter and margarine, sugary foods, and fruit juice.

A Columbia University-led study of 330 people with a mean age of 80 found that people following a dietary pattern that encourages inflammation exhibited poorer executive function. Magnetic resonance imaging revealed that they also had a smaller total volume of brain gray matter. This pattern of eating involved high intake of cholesterol, beta-carotene, and lutein, and low intake of [omega-3 fatty acids](#), calcium, folate, and vitamins.

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