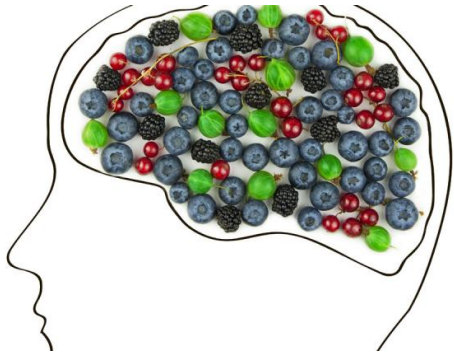


Diet proven to lower the risk of Alzheimer's disease also ranked No. 1 easiest to follow

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Credit: Rush University Medical Center

A diet created, studied and reported on by researchers at Rush University Medical Center has been ranked the easiest diet to follow and the second best overall diet (tying in both categories) for 2016 by U.S. News & World Report.

The MIND [diet](#) also tied for third for best diet for healthy eating and was ranked in the top five in five categories and the top 20 in seven, as follows:

- Easiest Diets to Follow: No. 1 (tie)
- Best Diets Overall: No. 2 (tie)
- Best Diets for Healthy Eating: No. 3 (tie)
- Best Diets for Diabetes: No. 4 (tie)
- Best Heart-Healthy Diets: No. 4
- Best Weight-Loss Diets: No. 16 (tie)
- Best Fast Weight-Loss Diets: No. 21 (tie)

Now in its sixth year, the annual "Best Diets" list provides the facts about 35 chosen eating plans and ranks them on a range of levels, from their heart healthiness to their likelihood to help with weight loss. To create the annual rankings, U.S. News editors and reporters spend months winnowing potential additions to the diet roster and then mine medical journals, government reports and other resources to create in-depth profiles.

Each profile explains how the diet works, whether or not its claims are substantiated, scrutinizes it for possible health risks and examines what it's like to live on the diet, not just read about it.

Eating away at Alzheimer's risk

The MIND diet is a research-based diet developed by Martha Clare Morris, ScD, a Rush nutritional epidemiologist, and her colleagues. In recent studies, the MIND diet showed that it helped lower the risk of Alzheimer's by as much as 53 percent in participants who adhered to the diet rigorously, and by about 35 percent in those who followed it moderately well.

"One of the more exciting things about this is that people who adhered even moderately to the MIND diet had a reduction in their risk for Alzheimers," Morris says. The researchers also have found that adhering to the diet may slow cognitive decline among aging adults, even when the person is not at risk of developing Alzheimer's disease

The name of the MIND diet is short for Mediterranean-DASH Diet Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay. The diet is a hybrid of the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets.

Both diets have been found to reduce the risk of cardiovascular conditions, like hypertension, heart attack and stroke. Some researchers have found that the two older diets provide protection against dementia as well.

Morris and her colleagues developed the MIND diet based on information that has accrued from years' worth of research about what foods and nutrients have good, and bad, effects on the functioning of the brain.

A wine and no cheese party

The MIND diet has 15 dietary components, including 10 "brain-healthy food groups" and five unhealthy groups—red meat, butter and stick margarine, cheese, pastries and sweets, and fried or fast food.

To adhere to and benefit from the MIND diet, a person would need to eat at least three servings of whole grains, a green leafy vegetable and one other vegetable every day—along with a glass of wine—snack most days on nuts, have beans every other day or so, eat poultry and berries at least twice a week and fish at least once a week. In addition, the study found that to have a real shot at avoiding the devastating effects of cognitive decline, he or she must limit intake of the designated unhealthy foods, especially butter (less than 1 tablespoon a day), sweets and pastries, whole fat cheese, and fried or fast food (less than a serving a week for any of the three).

Berries are the only fruit specifically to be included in the MIND diet. "Blueberries are one of the more potent foods in terms of protecting the brain," Morris says, and strawberries also have performed well in past studies of the effect of food on cognitive function.

"The MIND diet is a modification of the Mediterranean and DASH diets that highlights the foods and nutrients shown through the scientific literature to be associated with dementia prevention," Morris says. "There is still a great deal of study we need to do in this area, and I expect that we'll make further modifications as the science on diet and the brain advances.

We devised a diet and it worked in this Chicago study," she adds. To establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the MIND diet and reductions in the incidence of Alzheimer's disease, "The results need to be confirmed by other investigators in different populations and also through randomized trials."

Provided by Rush University Medical Center

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