

New 'MIND' diet linked to reduced risk of Alzheimer's

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A new diet developed by researchers from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, IL, could significantly reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease, even for those who do not follow it precisely.



The MIND diet focuses specifically on berries rather than consumption of all fruits.

Blueberries and strawberries, in particular, have been hailed for their brain benefits.

This is the finding of a new study published in *Alzheimer's & Dementia: The*

Journal of the Alzheimer's Association.

The diet - called the Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay (MIND) diet - was created by nutritional epidemiologist Martha Clare Morris, PhD, and colleagues at Rush. It uses aspects of the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet - an eating plan based on studies supported by the National Institutes of Health - and the [Mediterranean diet](#).

While both the Mediterranean and DASH diets have been shown to reduce the risk of cardiovascular problems, such as [heart attack](#), [stroke](#) and [high blood pressure](#), some studies have suggested the diets may also protect against [dementia](#).

The newly created MIND diet, according to Morris and Colleagues, is easier to follow than the Mediterranean and DASH diets. It consists of 15 dietary components: 10 "brain-healthy food groups" and five unhealthy food groups. Green leafy vegetables, other vegetables, nuts, berries, beans, whole grains, fish, poultry, olive oil and wine make up the brain-healthy foods, while red meats, butter and stick margarine, cheese, pastries and sweets, and fried or fast food are the food groups that should be limited.

Unlike the DASH and Mediterranean diets - in which high consumption of all fruits is recommended - the MIND diet focuses specifically on berries. Morris explains that [blueberries](#) and strawberries, in particular, have been hailed for their brain benefits in past research.

Moderate adherence to MIND diet reduced Alzheimer's risk by 35%

For their study, the researchers analyzed the food intake of 923 Chicago residents between the ages of 58 and 98 who were part of the Rush Memory and Aging Project - an ongoing study that aims to identify factors that may protect cognitive health.

Dietary information was gathered from food frequency questionnaires the participants completed between 2004 and 2013. The researchers scored participants on how closely their food intake matched either the MIND diet, Mediterranean diet or DASH diet, and incidence of [Alzheimer's disease](#) was assessed over an average follow-up period of 4.5 years.

The researchers found that participants whose food intake closely followed either of the three diets were at lower risk of Alzheimer's. Participants who followed the

Mediterranean diet were at 54% lower risk, those who followed the MIND diet were at 53% lower risk, while followers of the DASH diet had a 39% reduced risk for Alzheimer's.

However, the team found that participants who had a moderate adherence to the Mediterranean or DASH diets showed no reduced risk for Alzheimer's, while moderate adherence to the MIND diet still put participants at 35% lower risk of developing the disease.

Morris says one of the most exciting things about their findings is the fact that even following the MIND diet moderately well indicated significant protection against Alzheimer's. "I think that will motivate people," she adds.

However, the researchers note that to really benefit from the MIND diet, followers should not overindulge in unhealthy foods, particularly butter, cheese and fried foods.

On eliminating participants who changed their diet at some point during follow-up, the team found that participants who followed the MIND diet for a longer duration saw the highest protection against Alzheimer's. "As is the case with many health-related habits, including physical exercise," says Morris, "you'll be healthier if you've been doing the right thing for a long time."

While further studies are needed to confirm these findings, the researchers believe the MIND diet shows promise for reducing the risk of Alzheimer's. "We devised a diet and it worked in this Chicago study," Morris adds.

Talking to *Medical News Today*, Morris said there is no reason why people should wait to try the MIND diet, however. "The dietary components of the MIND diet are also the foundations of the Mediterranean and DASH diets - both of which have been found through randomized controlled trials to have many cardiovascular benefits," she said. "It is hard to come up with a potential downside to adopting these dietary habits."

Last week, *MNT* reported on a study published in *Science Translational Medicine*, in which Australian researchers reveal how a new [ultrasound technique successfully restored memory](#) in mouse models of Alzheimer's.

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Fast facts about Alzheimer's

More than 5 million people in the US are living with Alzheimer's, and this number is expected to rise to as many as 16 million by 2050

Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the US

More than two thirds of Americans with Alzheimer's are women.
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