

New Dietary Approach Against Alzheimer's: MIND diet combines proven patterns with brain-specific research. (from Tufts Health and Nutrition newsletter, October 2015)

While both a Mediterranean-style diet and the DASH eating plan are associated with brain benefits, a hybrid dietary pattern that combines the best of both with the latest cognitive research may protect memory and thinking even better. A new study reports that the MIND (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) diet was associated with a slower rate of cognitive decline—equivalent to 7.5 years of younger age. Those with the highest MIND diet scores were 53% less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than those with the lowest scores.

The lower risk for those most closely following the MIND diet was similar to those with the highest adherence to a Mediterranean diet (54%) and the DASH plan (39%). But only the top one-third of Mediterranean and DASH scores were associated with lower Alzheimer's risk. The second-highest third of MIND scores were also associated with lower risk (35%), however, suggesting that even modest dietary improvements following the MIND pattern could be beneficial.

"Inflammation and oxidative stress play a large role in the development and progression of Alzheimer's disease," says Tammy Scott, PhD, a scientist at Tufts' HNRCA Neuroscience and Aging Laboratory. "The MIND diet particularly emphasizes foods, such as green leafy vegetables, berries and olive oil, which are rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents that may help to protect against dementia and cognitive decline."

WHAT'S YOUR MIND SCORE?

The MIND diet score assigns a maximum of one point for each of these components, up to a total of 15 points:

- Whole grains, at least 3 servings/day
- Green leafy vegetables, at least 6 servings/week
- Other vegetables, at least 1 serving/day
- Berries, at least 2 servings/week
- Red meats, fewer than 4 servings/week
- Fish, at least 1 serving/week
- Poultry, at least 2 servings/week
- Beans, at least 3 servings/week
- Nuts, at least 5 servings/week
- Fast/fried food, less than 1 serving/week
- Olive oil as primary oil
- Butter/margarine, less than 1 Tbsp/day
- Cheese, less than 1 serving/week
- Pastries/sweets, less than 5 servings/week
- Alcohol, 1 serving/day