

Alzheimer's Disease & Nutrition

A progressive condition, Alzheimer's disease damages areas of the brain involved in memory, intelligence, judgment, language and behavior. It is the most common form of mental decline in older adults and is usually diagnosed by age 70 or older. For four million Americans, the disease affects not only memory, but behavior, personality, the ability to think and the ability to function day-to-day. At this time there is no known cure.

While there is no special diet required for people with Alzheimer's disease — unless they have another condition, such as diabetes, that requires a particular diet — eating a well-balanced, nutritious diet is extremely beneficial. With the proper diet, our bodies work more efficiently and have more energy.

The Nutrition Basics

Let's talk about the basics:

- Eat a variety of foods from each food group.
- Include antioxidant-rich foods, such as dark and vibrantly colored fruits and vegetables.
- Consume heart-healthy omega fats from fish, as well as nuts, seeds and grains.
- Maintain body weight through a proper balance of exercise and nutrition.
- Choose foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol.
- Try to limit simple sugars.
- Moderate use of salt.
- Drink eight 8 oz. glasses of water per day (unless you are on a fluid-restricted regimen, due to another medical condition, such as congestive heart failure).

Antioxidants

Research has shown that consuming a diet rich in antioxidants may help decrease one's risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Of these antioxidant vitamins, vitamin E and vitamin C have proven to be most influential.

Vitamin E is a fat-soluble vitamin found primarily in vegetable and nut oils, as well as in spinach and whole grain products. Vitamin C is a water-soluble vitamin most commonly found in citrus fruits, such as oranges and grapefruit, as well as in tomatoes, spinach and red peppers. For maximum prevention, it is recommended that

these vitamins be provided by actual foods in the diet, rather than nutritional supplements.

Foods High In Vitamin E

Vegetable oil
Corn oil
Spinach
Wheat germ
Soybean oil
Safflower oil
Whole grains
Sunflower seeds

Foods High In Vitamin C

Broccoli	Oranges
Kiwifruit	Peppers
Pineapple	Strawberries
Grapefruit	Avocados
Asparagus	Lemons
Collards	Onions
Mango	Cantaloupe

Fat and Cholesterol

Consuming a diet lower in cholesterol is also thought to be beneficial in Alzheimer's prevention. Cholesterol comes from animal products, such as eggs, meat, poultry, fish and dairy products. The American Heart Association recommends consuming no more than 300 mg of cholesterol per day for good health.

Because high fat diets are thought to impair learning and memory performance, elevated blood cholesterol may be related to the development of Alzheimer's disease. High levels of cholesterol in the blood or a diet high in saturated fat can triple a person's risk for developing this disease.

Maintaining a Healthy Brain

Dr. Perlmutter, a board-certified neurologist with over 30 years of experience studying neuroscience, says the most important way to keep the brain functioning at its peak is through nutrition. "It's as simple as that," says Dr. Perlmutter. "Nutrition is THE most important tool for staying mentally and physically fit, but it's the most underutilized tool." The most important nutrient for the brain is fat, because the brain is made of fat. The problem is that if we feed it unhealthy fats, we wind up with an unhealthy brain. Monounsaturated fats like olive oil are naturally high in antioxidants and, when incorporated in the brain, are less vulnerable to damage done by free radicals. The best fat for the brain is omega-3 fatty acids, which are found in cold water, fatty fish, deep green leafy vegetables, and some grains and seeds.

Other sources of essential fatty acids are omega 6 fatty acids found in cooking oils, nuts, seeds, and cereals.

Avoiding Processed Foods

Highly processed and chemically laden foods invite harmful free radicals to invade our brains. The first step to a healthy brain is getting rid of processed/sugary and starchy junk foods. Replace them with real food, such as unprocessed, whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Eliminate the unnecessary sugary sodas and snack foods. Buy organic or all-natural produce and meats that are free of chemical pesticides, hormones, and antibiotics. All of these changes can add up to significant health benefits.

Supplementation

Supplementation can help manage Alzheimer's. Studies have shown that including omega 3 fatty acids, vitamin C and E, antioxidants can help manage and ward off the symptoms of the disease. Listed below are the supplements recommended for those who have been diagnosed or have a strong family history of Alzheimer's disease. Remember, supplements are intended to be used in addition to a balanced diet of lean protein, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and heart healthy fats. Make sure they are manufactured by a company with NPA's certification for good manufacturing practices. Additional supplements may be recommended by your doctor.

Krill or Fish oil

Vitamin C & E

Super Greens and/or Resveratrol - pure form of antioxidants