

# HEALTH

BOOST BRAIN HEALTH | STRESS LESS THIS CHRISTMAS | REDUCE TECH STRAIN

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay, or MIND, diet was created by researchers from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago to describe the eating habits they found to support brain health.

## FEED YOUR MIND

BY TRALEE PEARCE

What if the foods you choose could help prevent Alzheimer's disease? That's the tantalizing promise behind the MIND diet, a style of eating linked to a lowered risk of getting the progressive degenerative brain disease—one that disproportionately affects women.

**I**n fact, 72 percent of Canadians with the disease are women, according to the Toronto-based Alzheimer Society of Canada. While genetics do play a role in whether you'll develop dementia (including Alzheimer's), what you eat is an important factor in reducing the risk of developing dementia, too. A study led by researchers from Rush University Medical Center in Chicago noticed that, of the 923 adults tracked for an average of 4½ years each, those who rigorously adhered to the MIND diet lowered their risk of Alzheimer's by up to 53 percent. In addition, the aging of their brains slowed by about 7½ years.

So, what is this seemingly magical food plan? MIND—which is short for “Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay”—features a combination of two well-known doctor-approved diets: fish, red wine and olive oil from the diets traditionally followed by countries bordering the Mediterranean, such as Italy, Morocco, Greece and Spain; along with the lean proteins and low-fat foods of the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet, which became popular after a 1997 study found that it lowered blood pressure. Salads, vegetables, nuts and berries round out the food plan, which is already being promoted by groups such as the Canadian nonprofit Women's Brain Health Initiative, based in Toronto. ◻

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCKPHOTO



# WHAT'S ON THE MIND DIET?

One reason the MIND diet might be working is its high levels of antioxidants and nutrients such as lutein and beta-carotene, which may help protect the brain and body from damage and stresses, says Dr. Vivien Brown, Toronto family physician, vice-president of medical affairs at Medisys and a Women's Brain Health Initiative board member. It also promotes good circulation, another factor in brain health. While more research is needed to understand the link between this style of eating and the positive effects on the brain, the MIND diet does require some dedication. "This is not about a week or two of healthy eating, but rather, a lifestyle commitment to see long-term benefit," says Dr. Brown. She adds, though, that even moderate adherence does have benefits, and that we shouldn't forget other lifestyle factors that help prevent dementia, such as not smoking, keeping blood pressure within a normal range, exercising and enjoying a social life.

To make the diet easier to try, we asked health and wellness expert Rose Reisman to design a week's plan of meals and snacks. Bonus: The healthful classics that follow make eating for a healthy brain taste delicious. ●

 AT LEAST THREE SERVINGS OF WHOLE GRAINS EACH DAY

AT LEAST ONE DARK GREEN SALAD AND ONE OTHER VEGETABLE EACH DAY



BERRIES AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK



AT LEAST A ONE-OUNCE SERVING OF NUTS EACH DAY



BEANS OR LEGUMES AT LEAST EVERY OTHER DAY



POULTRY AT LEAST TWICE A WEEK



FISH AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK



*If you don't drink alcohol, purple, grape juice provides many of the same benefits.*

A FIVE-OUNCE GLASS OF RED WINE EACH DAY



NO MORE THAN ONE TABLESPOON A DAY OF BUTTER OR MARGARINE. CHOOSE OLIVE OIL INSTEAD



CHEESE, FRIED FOOD AND FAST FOOD NO MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK

PASTRIES AND SWEETS LESS THAN FIVE TIMES A WEEK



## The Meal Plan

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
BREAKFAST	2 eggs scrambled in 1 tbsp butter + ½ cup berries	1 cup steel-cut oatmeal with ¼ cup milk and 2 tbsp dried fruit	½ cup plain Greek yogurt + ½ cup strawberries	1 slice whole grain bread with 1 tbsp peanut butter and 1 sliced banana	1 slice whole wheat French toast + ½ cup berries	Smoothie made with 1 cup plain Greek yogurt, 1 cup berries and 1 tbsp honey	Frittata (1 egg) with ½ cup diced vegetables + 2 pieces whole grain lavash
SNACK	1 oz cheese + 4 whole grain crackers	½ cup edamame in pods	¼ cup nuts	1 hard-cooked egg + 4 whole grain crackers	1 cup vegetables + ¼ cup hummus	¼ cup dried fruit + ¼ cup nuts	½ cup roasted chickpeas
LUNCH	1 cup cooked whole grain pasta + ½ cup tomato sauce with ½ cup vegetables + ¼ cup toasted almonds	2 cups kale salad with 1 tbsp olive oil and balsamic vinegar + ¼ cup beans + ¼ cup toasted pecans	2 slices whole grain bread with 2 tbsp peanut butter and 1 sliced banana + 2 cups dark green salad with 1 tbsp olive oil	2 cups dark green salad with 1 tbsp olive oil and lemon dressing + ½ cup chickpeas	2 cups cooked whole grain pasta with ½ cup tomato sauce + 1½ cups dark green salad	1 large whole wheat pita + ½ cup hummus + 1½ cups grilled vegetables	1 cup 2-bean salad with 1 tbsp olive oil + 1 cup diced vegetables
SNACK	1 small date square	1 apple + 4 whole grain crackers	½ cup plain Greek yogurt + ¼ cup dried fruit	1 cup vegetables + ¼ cup hummus	¼ cup dried fruit + ¼ cup nuts	1 cup microwave popcorn	2 fruit kabobs + ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
DINNER	3 oz chicken breast + 1 cup sugar snap peas sautéed in 1 tbsp olive oil + 1½ cups dark green salad + 5 oz red wine	3 oz beef burger + 3 sweet-potato wedges + 5 oz red wine	3 oz white fish + ½ cup cooked brown rice + 1 cup veggies + 5 oz red wine	3 oz pork tenderloin + 4 large spears grilled asparagus + ½ cup cooked whole wheat couscous + 5 oz red wine	3 oz turkey breast + 1 cup mashed yellow-fleshed potatoes with 1 tbsp olive oil + 5 oz red wine	3 oz grilled tofu + 2 cups stir-fried bok choy + ½ cup cooked soba noodles + 1½ cups dark green salad + 5 oz red wine	3 oz salmon with mango salsa + 1 cup cooked wild rice pilaf with ¼ cup toasted pecans + 1½ cup dark green salad + 5 oz red wine

