

The MIND Diet

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Overview

MIND stands for the Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay.

The MIND diet aims to reduce dementia and the decline in brain health that often occurs as people get older. It combines aspects of two very popular diets, the Mediterranean diet and the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet.

A lot of research has been done to establish that the DASH and Mediterranean diets are the healthiest we could choose. Only a few epidemiological studies have been published on the MIND diet, with their main findings showing that adherence to the MIND diet is associated with a reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Here's what [Mayo Clinic](#) has to say about it:

"The research is in: Eating certain foods (and avoiding others) has been shown to slow brain aging by 7.5 years and lessen the chances of developing Alzheimer's disease.

This isn't some trendy diet of the moment. Born as a hybrid of two existing eating styles with decades of research at their backs — the DASH diet and Mediterranean diet — university researchers developed the MIND diet to emphasize foods that impact brain health."

There are no real specific guidelines as far as how many servings to get of each of the categories, but Kim McClintic shared those guidelines for the [DASH](#) diet.

Specifically the DASH diet plan includes:

Type of food	Number of servings for 1600 - 3100 Calorie diets	Servings on a 2000 Calorie diet
Grains and grain products (include at least 3 whole grain foods each day)	6 - 12	7 - 8
Fruits	4 - 6	4 - 5
Vegetables	4 - 6	4 - 5
Low fat or non fat dairy foods	2 - 4	2 - 3
Lean meats, fish, poultry	1.5 - 2.5	2 or less
Nuts, seeds, and legumes	3 - 6 per week	4 - 5 per week
Fats and sweets	2 - 4	limited

The DASH Diet for Healthy Blood Pressure

Follow these DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) guidelines for a healthier, more balanced diet



Mediterranean Diet Pyramid

A contemporary approach to delicious, healthy eating

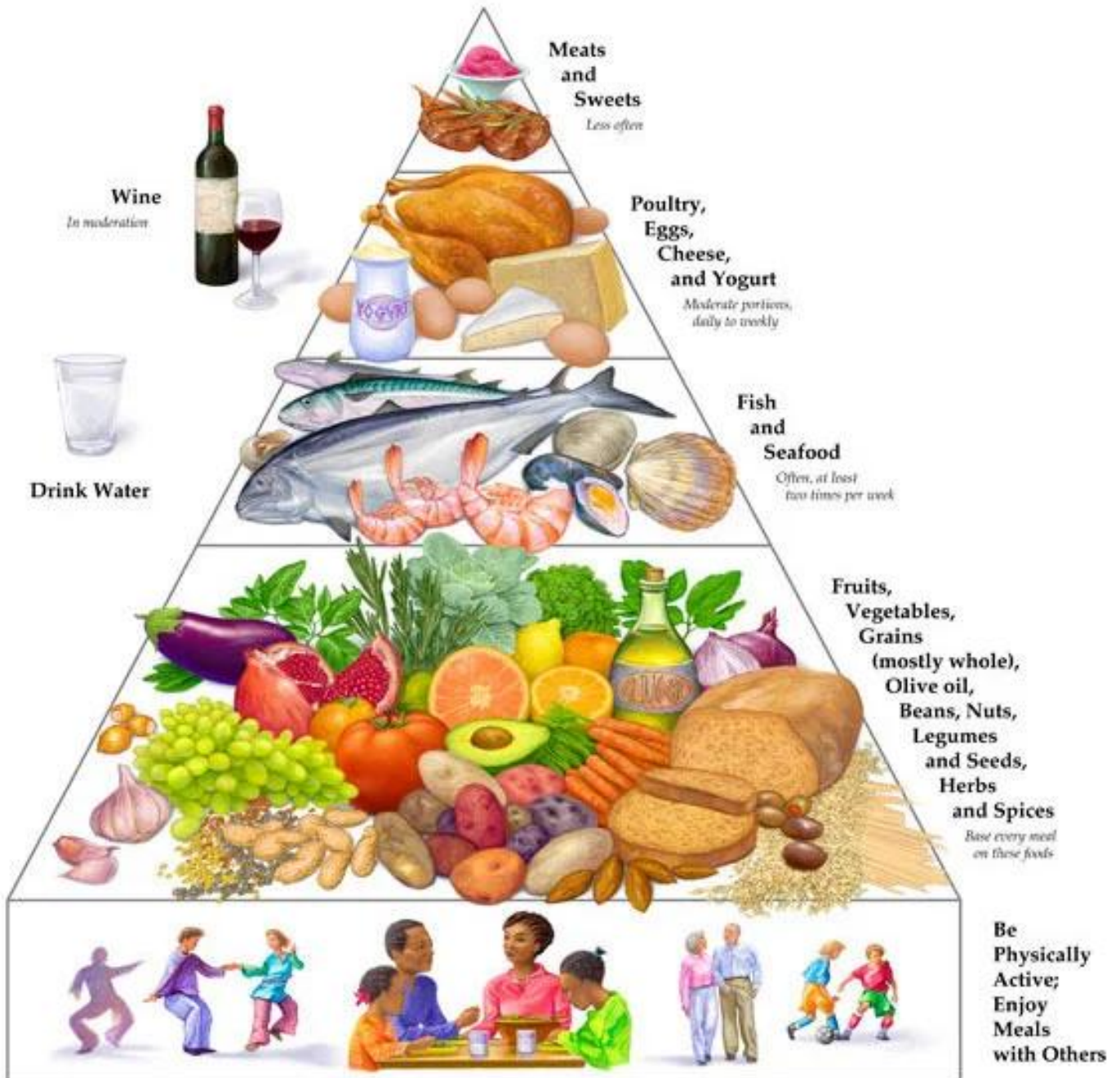


Illustration by George Middleton

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Similarly, the MIND diet utilizes my favorite way to diet: eat more of this and less of that with nothing being truly off limits. It is broken down to 5 foods to limit and 10 foods to increase.

Increase intake of these 10 foods:

- **Green, leafy vegetables**

Researchers found that green leafy ones like kale, collards, spinach or lettuce were specifically shown to lower the risk of dementia and cognitive decline. Greens are packed with nutrients linked to better brain health like folate, vitamin E, carotenoids and flavonoids. And one serving a day has been shown to slow brain aging.

- **All other vegetables**

Add in one more vegetable serving per day to round out your veggies.

- **Berries**

In a 20-year study of over 16,000 older adults, those who ate the most blueberries and strawberries had the slowest rates of cognitive decline. Researchers credit the high levels of flavonoids in berries with the benefit. Treat yourself to two or more berry servings a week for peak brain health. Fruit is on both the DASH and Mediterranean diets, however, research indicates specific brain power in berries specifically.

- **Nuts**

Nuts may be high in calories and fat, but they're packed with fat-soluble vitamin E, known for its brain-protective qualities. Grab a handful at least five times a week instead of processed snacks like chips or pastries. Check the list of ingredients and opt for the dry-roasted or raw, unsalted kind without extra sodium, sweeteners or oils. (Hint: No-stir peanut butters have stuff added like salt and sugar.)

- **Olive oil**

A staple in the Mediterranean and MIND diet is olive oil. Researchers recommend using it as your primary cooking oil, and avoiding butter and margarine.

New to olive oil? Look for "extra virgin" olive oil (skip anything labeled "light") and choose a bottle that's opaque or dark glass since light causes it to go bad faster.

- **Whole grains**

Aim for at least three servings daily. Choose whole grains like oatmeal, quinoa, brown rice, whole-wheat pasta and 100% whole-wheat bread.

- **Fish**

Adults age 65 and older who ate fish once a week or more scored better on memory tests and tricky number games than those who had seafood less often. But if fish isn't your favorite, there's good news: MIND diet researchers couldn't find proof that having it more than once a week added extra benefits for the brain.

- **Beans**

Beans, lentils and soybeans, which pack protein and fiber, make a worthy substitute. They'll keep you full and are rich in B vitamins, which are important for brain health. In one study analyzing the diets of older adults, those who had the lowest intakes of legumes had greater cognitive decline than those who ate more.

- **Poultry**

Try to eat chicken or turkey at least twice a week. Note that fried chicken is not encouraged on the MIND diet.

- **Wine** (no more than one glass per day)

Both red and white wine may benefit the brain. However, much research has focused on the red wine compound resveratrol, which may help protect against Alzheimer's disease. While too much alcohol is unquestionably harmful to the brain and overall health, studies suggest that light to moderate drinking may lower the risk of dementia. And it may delay the onset of Alzheimer's Disease by two to three years. One possible reason: Alcohol seems to help blood flow, making it less sticky and less prone to potentially harmful clotting. Given the risks of alcohol, it's probably not a good idea to start drinking it just for the possible brain benefit. But if you enjoy a glass of wine with dinner, you can continue the habit on the MIND diet.

Decrease or limit the intake of these 5 foods:

- **Butter/Margarine**

Try to limit your intake to 1 TB/day making olive oil your primary source of fat. Try dipping your bread in olive oil and herbs. Yum!

- **Cheese**

Limit your cheese intake to less than once a week. If you often use cheese or salt to give flavor to your favorite dishes, try adding spices or herbs instead. The Mediterranean diet traditionally uses herbs and spices to season food as a healthy alternative.

- **Red meat**

Aim for no more than three servings each week. This includes all beef, pork, lamb and products made from these meats.

- **Fried food**

The MIND diet highly discourages fried food, especially the kind from fast-food restaurants. Limit your consumption to less than once per week.

- **Sweets**

This includes most of the processed junk food and desserts you can think of: ice cream, cookies, brownies, snack cakes, donuts, candy and more. Try to limit these to no more than four times a week. I, Kim Hillard (not a dietician) personally think this is high. I try to limit my dessert to once/week.

WHAT'S ON THE MIND DIET?



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



In summary, the MIND diet can enhance cognitive function, slow mental decline and prolong some of the effect of Alzheimer's. This diet outlines guidelines in an *eat more of this, eat less of that* way that can be unintimidating to those not interested in a very strict diet. Please reach out to Kim or Jill if you have any more questions.

References:

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/mind-diet>

<https://foodinsight.org/what-is-the-mind-diet/>

<https://bebrainfit.com/improve-memory/>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/improve-brain-health-with-the-mind-diet/art-20454746>

Books found on Amazon:

DIET FOR THE MIND

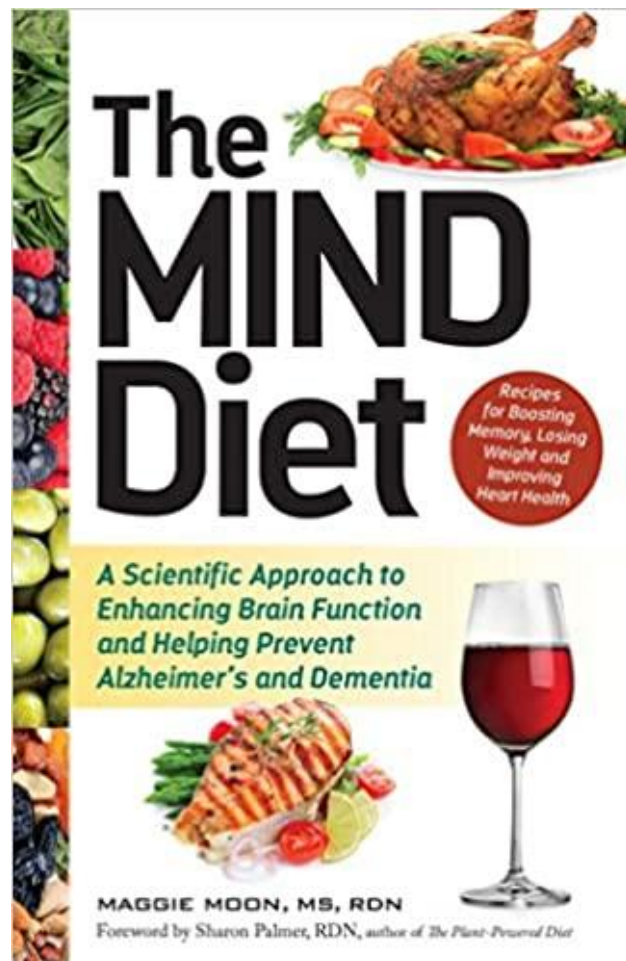


*The Latest
Science on What
to Eat to Prevent
Alzheimer's and
Cognitive
Decline*

From the Creator of the MIND Diet

Dr. Martha Clare Morris

WITH 80 RECIPES BY LAURA MORRIS



There are also plenty of cookbooks available as well.