

Cooking for cognition



What's good for the heart is good for the brain

Diet can contribute to the prevention of dementia and the improvement of memory and other cognitive functions.

This leaflet takes you around the world to provide some tasty recipes to prevent memory decline and dementia, as well as heart disease.

Eat less

Studies suggest eating less is best for longevity and long-term health (so eat until you are half full rather than stuffed!). Eating a varied diet is better than taking supplements.

The Mediterranean

Research shows that eating a Mediterranean diet is associated with better cognitive function, lower rates of cognitive decline and a reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Recipe – spaghetti bolognese

Cook **tomatoes, carrot, garlic and onion** – all contain high levels of anti-oxidants and anti-inflammatory agents which can reduce the risk of damage to the heart and brain.

Add **Italian herbs and some red wine** – they have shown positive effects on brain function.

Use **organic grass-fed beef mince** without fat, which contains vitamin B12 and iron.

It's all about balance

Eating tofu two to three times a week carries no risk for dementia, but eaten every day for older people may do so.

Similarly, the risks previously thought to be induced by butter and eggs on heart health are probably overrated. The majority of cholesterol is produced by the liver and what we eat only has a minor effect on this.

Don't forget to exercise

Try to reduce blood cholesterol, blood pressure, fat around the tummy and their associated risk for diabetes, dementia and heart disease by exercising. Try walking to the shops for your healthy ingredients – 30 minutes, five to seven days a week is a good start.

Reheat cooked spaghetti – it's better for stabilising blood sugar (and using whole grain pasta is better because it contains B vitamins).

Combinations of foods can reduce dementia risk – a freshly picked **green mixed leaf salad full of folate, together with olive oil** (which fights plaques because of oleocanthal) improves immune system, vascular health and reduces risk of dementia.

Add **nuts (almonds, walnuts) and avocado** to further reduce risk of dementia as they contain anti-oxidants and omega-3 fats.

A pinch of **salt, fresh black pepper and a dash of apple cider vinegar and sweet chilli sauce** can further liven up the taste and have shown beneficial effects.

India

Some studies showed that people in rural India had a lower risk of dementia. This may be because, at the time, the majority of people did not reach an old enough age to get dementia (the majority of people with dementia are over 65). However part of this may also be because of the food they ate.

Recipe – dahl

Fry finely **chopped onion, garlic, cumin seeds, fresh ginger, fresh green chilli and turmeric** in butter – these herbs and spices are thought to have powerful protective effects on the brain.

Add 400g **red lentils** – pour water over the lentils until covered and let simmer until they are soft. Remember to keep adding water.

Lentils are good for maintaining steady blood sugars and can decrease blood pressure and cholesterol.

Add **fresh coriander** before serving – this may also protect brain function.

Serve with **brown rice** which contains fibers and may reduce cholesterol.

Food tip:

One cup of lentils gives 39% of your iron intake and 90% of your folate intake.

Oranges also contain lots of folate. Both folate and cobalamin are associated with reduced risk in dementia in people who do not have symptoms yet.

Indonesia

People in Indonesia also have a lowered dementia risk. We found that eating a lot of tofu (every day) was not as good for people over 65 but may be part of a healthy diet in mid-life, especially for women during and after the menopause.

Tempe is a fermented soy product which contains cobalamin and folate, shown to reduce the brain plaques seen in dementia and improve memory, even in old people.

Food tip:

Peanut butter has been shown to lower the bad (LDL) cholesterol.

Recipe – tofu and vegetables

Cook with lots of green vegetables like **cabbage, green beans** and fried tempe.

Add **tofu coated in turmeric**.

Fry a **chopped onion, some ginger, turmeric and garlic**.

Add some **soy sauce and peanut butter** as well as **sweet chilli sauce** and fry the tempe and tofu, both coated in turmeric powder.

When the soy products are crispy, add the vegetables. Add **boiled egg and rice** for a delicious and very quick meal.

The information contained in this leaflet is based on research by the Dementia Research Group at Loughborough University.