



CLIPPINGS a weekly column from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

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For Immediate Release

Concerned About Memory and Brain Health as You Get Older?

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Eat for Your Brain.

Concerned about your brain health and memory as you get older? Dementia is a public health concern and much research is focused on ways to reduce cognitive decline. The best thing for our brain is to keep good blood flow to it. How can we promote that? Eating according to the USDA's MyPlate guidelines and getting the recommended 150 minutes of physical activity per week is a good start.

We can potentially further strengthen memory and cognition by applying research that shows the Mediterranean diet and the blood pressure lowering DASH diet (Dietary Approach to Systolic Hypertension) have both shown protection against cognitive decline.

The MIND diet combines these two diets, focusing on the strongest findings in the diet-dementia field. Consider ways to add these foods to your diet to incorporate the growing body of evidence that shows what we eat can help with memory and alertness.

Eat your vegetables.

Eating two to three cups of vegetables every day is good for our brains and follows MyPlate eating. Cruciferous vegetables are especially tied to improved memory. Broccoli, cabbage, Brussel sprouts and dark leafy greens like collards and kale are all included. Add them to soups, salads, sandwiches and wraps.

Enjoy berries often.

Blueberries, blackberries, cherries and strawberries have the strongest tie to boosting memory function. They are a rich source of anthocyanins and other flavonoids which you will get if you eat them in any form - fresh, frozen, dried, or canned. Enjoy them as a snack, toss on your salad, add to cereal and yogurt or keep dried berries in your desk drawer for a quick pick-me-up.

Get your omea-3 fatty acids.

What are omega-3's? The best source is seafood and fatty fish, including salmon, bluefin tuna, sardines, mackerel and herring. DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), in particular, may help improve memory

in healthy young adults. Eight to twelve ounces of fish per week is recommended. In other words, try to eat fish at least twice a week.

Walnuts are great.

Research has shown that walnuts can have a positive impact on heart health, but they may also improve brain function. Add about ¼ cup of walnuts to your diet each day. Snack on a handful or add them to hot and cold cereal, yogurt, salads or stir fries and rice dishes.

Olive Oil is best.

Make olive oil your first choice when you need a fat or oil in cooking.

Foods to eat less of?

Don't overdo it with butter and stick margarine, fried food, fast food, pastries, sweets or highly processed foods.

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