



The World Over, Fish, Fruit, Vegetables Help Prevent Dementia, Alzheimer's

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Research findings have been building for some time to suggest that what you eat may help determine your risk of developing dementia or Alzheimer's. Now, three studies published almost simultaneously point to the same conclusion: People who regularly eat fish are at much less risk for either condition. Add a daily dose of fruits and vegetables as well as plant sources of omega3s and your risk might drop even lower.

British Findings on Fish. The first study, from the November issue of *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, was led by British researchers. They examined the link between seafood consumption and cognitive skills in more than 2,000 elderly Norwegians and found that as fish intake increased, the risk of cognitive decline decreased. Results of cognitive function tests revealed that the highest scores occurred in people who ate about six ounces of fish twice a week.

Dutch Study of Omega-3s. In a second study in the same issue of *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Dutch researchers reported on men and women in their 50s and 60s. Those who had the highest blood levels of omega-3 fats (the main fat in fish) showed 60% to 70% less decline in speed-related cognitive functions over three years compared to those with lower blood levels of omega-3s.

France Favors Fruits and Vegetables. A third study, published in the November issue of *Neurology* by French researchers, found three additional dietary components that might reduce risk: fruits, vegetables and plant sources of omega-3s, such as walnuts and canola oil. The researchers looked at the diets of more than 8,000 men and women over age 65 and noted how many of them developed dementia or Alzheimer's over the next four years.

The researchers found that daily consumption of fruits and vegetables and regular use of omega-3-rich oils (e.g., canola and walnut) were linked to less incidence of dementia, while weekly consumption of fish was linked to fewer cases of Alzheimer's.

The Bottom Line. The evidence is mounting that diet influences the risk of cognitive conditions. While these three studies were observational—instead of clinical trials that would have carried more weight—they were unanimous in their findings on fish. And even though only one study looked at fruits and vegetables and plant sources of omega-3s, why wait for more evidence?

All current recommendations for healthful eating—from the Dietary Guidelines to those from the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society—emphasize eating more fruits, vegetables, fish and nuts and prefer canola oil over corn oil. These latest studies provide more compelling reason to follow that advice.

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Health Care Insights, LLC P.O. Box 2683, Acton, MA 01720

Telephone: 978-621-1926 Fax: 978-263-5085

Email and websites: nemerson@healthcareinsights.net nemerson@bu.edu www.healthcareinsights.net