

Preventing cognitive decline through diet

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Madam, diet and exercise influence life in many ways. In fact, people are always in pursuit of diets that are effective and easy to follow. Studies show that the Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension (DASH diet) and The Mediterranean diet are beneficial for weight loss, glycaemic control in diabetics, primary prevention in patients at high risk of cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, a decrease in the mortality rate and slower cognitive decline in the elderly.¹

With the advancing health care system, the mean life expectancy in Pakistan has increased to 66.7 years,² consequently increasing the prevalence of diseases related to the elderly population, such as Alzheimer's Dementia. Interestingly, recent studies show that a combination of the DASH and Mediterranean diets, called the MIND diet, slows cognitive decline in the elderly and reduces the risk of having Alzheimer's disease.³

The combination of oxidative, inflammatory and metabolic stress and vascular impairment contribute to age related neurodegenerative changes.⁴ Designed specifically in keeping with the above fact, the MIND diet emphasizes intake of green leafy vegetables, nuts, strawberries and blueberries, whole grains and olive oil, all the components are rich in antioxidants like Vitamin E, flavonoids, Carotenoids, vitamin B12, folate and have anti-inflammatory properties.⁴ It also encourages limited intake of saturated and trans fats like red meat, fish, and dairy products.³ Studies suggest that these components

also decrease the levels of Amyloid- β , an abnormally processed protein and major hallmark of Alzheimer disease pathology, by altering gene expression and thus promoting healthy brain aging.⁵

We want to draw the attention of the readers towards the importance of the role an effective diet can play in the management of disease, of tailoring the appropriate diet to the appropriate patient and educating patients about the benefits of lifestyle modifications. We also want to draw the attention of the reader to the need for exploring the effects and mechanisms of the MIND diet on the South-East Asian population.

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