

In Good Health

Your Monthly Wellness Spotlight by PSA

HEALTHY DIET, HAPPY BRAIN: HOW YOUR DIET CAN AFFECT YOUR BRAIN'S HEALTH

We all go through life worrying about being healthy, losing weight, reducing stress, and exercising more. As the list continues, it is important to understand how these factors can also impact other parts of your body such as your brain. In this month's In Good Health flyer, learn about the MIND diet and the benefits a healthy diet can have on your brain.

The MIND Diet

You likely have heard of diets such as a Mediterranean or DASH diet. The Mediterranean Diet resembles the eating patterns of those in countries that border the Mediterranean Sea. This diet includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, grains, potatoes, beans, nuts, and seeds. It also favors fish and poultry over red meats. The DASH Diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) is an eating plan that focuses on decreasing your blood pressure. It consists of rich foods that contain potassium, magnesium, and calcium, all of which have been shown to lower blood pressure.

Recent studies have shown that the MIND Diet, a combination of both the Mediterranean Diet and the DASH Diet, can have substantial health benefits. The Rush Memory and Aging Project found that those who followed the MIND diet reduced their risk of memory loss and the development of Alzheimer's by as much as 53%. Those that did not follow a strict MIND diet still reduced their risk by 35%.

What Should You Eat and What You Should Avoid?

Researchers at Rush University have found that MIND dieters only need to make some changes to their normal diet to receive brain health benefits. The more you add, the better off you are.

- Green Leafy Vegetables at least 6 times a week – all other vegetables at least once a day.
- Nuts five times a week
- Less than 4 servings of red meat each week
- Beans at least 3 times a week
- Limit sweets to five times a week
- At least 3 servings of grains every day
- Poultry and berries at least twice a week
- Limit fast food
- Limit cheese to less than one serving a week
- Eat fish at least once a week
- Cook with olive oil and limit butter and margarine to less than a tablespoon a day
- Avoid fried foods

Benefits

Research on the benefits of the MIND diet continues, but the evidence so far shows that it is a good strategy to protect your brain! Before you start this diet or any diet, be sure to speak with your doctor to make sure that it is safe for you. Your health plan may even cover a licensed nutritionist to help you develop a meal plan that works best for you!

If you have further questions regarding any health matters, feel free to contact Danielle Herndon, RN, CMM – VP, Health Risk Management, at dherndon@psafinancial.com.