



Boost your memory by eating right

Before you cut into a big T-bone steak with French fries, here is some food for thought: Research suggests that what we eat might have an impact on our ability to remember and our likelihood of developing dementia as we age.

Take that steak you're about to slice into, for example. It's loaded with saturated fat, which is known to raise blood levels of unhealthy low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol. Other kinds of fats, such as trans-fats, do the same thing to LDL.

LDL cholesterol builds up in, and damages, arteries. "We know that's bad for your heart. There is now a lot of evidence that it's also bad for your brain," says Dr. Francine Grodstein, associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and associate epidemiologist at Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Diets high in cholesterol and fat might speed up the formation of beta-amyloid plaques in the brain. These sticky protein clusters are blamed for much of the damage that occurs in the brains of people with Alzheimer's

If saturated and trans-fats are the food villains, then mono- and polyunsaturated fats may be the heroes in the dietary battle to preserve memory. In particular, the Mediterranean diet, with its menu of foods that are high in healthy unsaturated fats (olive oil, fish, and nuts) has been linked to lower rates of dementia due to Alzheimer's disease and mild cognitive impairment (MCI)—the stage of memory loss that often precedes dementia.

The Mediterranean diet includes several components that might promote brain health:

Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, and olive oil help improve the health of blood vessels, reducing the risk for a memory-damaging stroke.

Fish are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which have been linked to lower levels of beta-amyloid proteins in the blood and better vascular health.

Moderate alcohol consumption raises levels of healthy high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol. Alcohol also lowers our cells' resistance to insulin, allowing it to lower blood sugar more effectively. Insulin resistance has been linked to dementia.

Source: Harvard Health

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