Food for Thought

The food choices you make daily might lower your odds of getting Alzheimer's disease. They include berries, leafy greens, and fish. The eating plan is called the MIND diet. MIND stands for Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay. It’s similar to two other healthy meal plans: the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) and the Mediterranean diet.

Both meal plans emphasize eating foods like fish, fruits, vegetables, beans, high-fiber breads and whole grains, nuts, and olive oil. Meat, cheese, and sweets are very limited. MIND-recommended foods are rich in vitamin E and the omega-3 fatty acid docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). Dietary vitamin E (tocopherol), found in nuts, plant oils, seeds, and leafy greens, is a strong antioxidant which protects against cell damage including our brain cells. Certain fish like salmon and sardines, fish oils, flaxseed, nuts, and vegetables oils (like canola) are excellent sources of omega-3 fatty acids which our brains are made of. The diet also includes plenty of B vitamins such as folate, and vitamins C and D, all of which have been found to help our brain’s nerve cells function.

You should eat foods from these 10 groups:
1. **Green leafy vegetables**: Every day or at least six servings a week like spinach and salad greens
2. **Other vegetables**: At least one a day
3. **Nuts**: Five servings a week like nuts and seeds and butters (almond, walnut, cashew, peanut, hazelnut, sunflower and sesame seed)
4. **Berries**: Two or more servings a week like strawberries and blueberries
5. **Beans**: At least three servings a week
6. **Whole grains**: Three or more servings a day like wheat germ, oats, brown rice, couscous, and whole wheat breads and pastas
7. **Fish**: At least once a week like tuna, salmon, mackerel, lake trout, herring, or sardines
8. **Poultry**: At least twice a week like chicken or turkey
9. **Olive oil**: Use it as your main cooking oil
10. **Wine**: One glass a day

You should limit eating these foods:
- **Red meat**: Less than four servings a week
- **Butter and margarine**: Less than a tablespoon daily
- **Cheese**: Less than one serving a week
- **Pastries and sweets**: Less than five servings a week
- **Fried or fast food**: Less than one serving a week

Sources: WebMD, Today’s Geriatric Medicine and Eatright.org
Tips to Boost your Memory

1. **Step It Up** — A 30-minute daily walk is one of the best things you can do for your body, including your brain.

2. **MIND Diet (See other side)**

3. **Engage Your Brain** — Play cards, join a book club, watch a football game with friends, or play a brain-training app. Any activity that is mentally challenging will keep your mind sharp.

4. **Stay Social** — Card games and book clubs also keep you socially active -- another plus for your brain.

5. **Sleep Right** — Avoid big meals before bed. Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning. Don't drink caffeine or alcohol close to bedtime. Avoid smoking or other forms of nicotine.

6. **Stop Stress** — High levels of the stress hormone, cortisol, make it harder to pull information from your brain's memory. Try different ways to relax, like meditation, yoga, or massage.

7. **Stub Out Cigarettes** — Effect on memory is probably due to small strokes it can cause in the brain.

8. **Get Checked** — Sometimes, medical conditions can cause memory loss such as depression, diabetes, thyroid disease, and vitamin deficiency. Certain medicines, such as sleep and anxiety drugs, can also affect memory. See your doctor to get checked and treated for these problems and to go over all your medicines.

9. **Use Memory Tricks** — Every time you learn a new name or word, say it out loud to seal it in your brain. Mentally connect each new name with an image. To help with recall, post sticky notes around the home and office or set reminders on your phone so you'll know when it's time to take your medicine or head to an important meeting.

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**Have a nutritional question or concern?** If you are participating in services offered by Schenectady County’s Senior and Long Term Care services, you are eligible to have a free consultation with a Registered Dietitian. Call Cornell Cooperative Extension, Schenectady County at 372-1622, ext. 269. Leave a message, if necessary, for dietitian to call you back.

Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services denies no person services or access to service based upon race, color, sex, religion, national origin, marital status and/or handicapping conditions. Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services is primarily funded with County tax dollars. Supplemental funding is through the New York State Office for the Aging under Title III-B/D, III-C-1, III-C-2, III-F of the Federal Older Americans Act, and New York State Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly (EISEP), Community Services for the Elderly Act (CSE), Congregate Services Initiative (CSI), and the Wellness In Nutrition (WIN).

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Consumer-centered access for long-term care information, referrals and assessments. For information, call 382-8481, #9, ext. 304