

Nutritional Influences on Alzheimer's disease: A Contemporary Review of the Science

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Introduction

Alzheimer's disease is a devastating neurodegenerative disorder characterized by progressive memory loss, cognitive decline and behavioral changes. As the global population ages, the prevalence of Alzheimer's is increasing, making it a significant public health concern. While the exact cause of Alzheimer's remains elusive, researchers have been exploring various factors that may contribute to its development and progression, including genetics, lifestyle and environmental factors. In recent years, there has been growing interest in understanding the potential impact of nutrition on Alzheimer's disease. This article presents a contemporary review of scientific evidence surrounding nutritional influences on Alzheimer's disease. The gut-brain axis refers to the bidirectional communication between the gastrointestinal tract and the central nervous system.

Emerging research suggests that the gut microbiome, a diverse community of microorganisms residing in the gut, may play a crucial role in brain health. Certain gut bacteria produce Short-Chain Fatty Acids (SCFAs) and neurotransmitters that can influence brain function and cognition. Dysbiosis, an imbalance in the gut microbiome, has been associated with inflammation and neurodegeneration in Alzheimer's disease. Dietary factors, such as a high-fiber, plant-based diet, can promote a diverse and healthy gut microbiome, potentially reducing the risk of Alzheimer's. Omega-3 fatty acids, particularly Eicosapentaenoic Acid (EPA) and Docosahexaenoic Acid (DHA), are essential fats known for their neuroprotective properties. These fatty acids play a crucial role in maintaining the structure and function of brain cells. Research suggests that a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids may help reduce inflammation, protect against oxidative stress and enhance cognitive function. Fatty fish, such as salmon and mackerel and plant-based sources like flaxseeds and walnuts are excellent dietary sources of omega-3 fatty acids [1].

Description

Oxidative stress, an imbalance between the production of free radicals and the body's ability to neutralize them, is believed to be a key contributor to neurodegenerative diseases, including Alzheimer's. Antioxidants are compounds that neutralize free radicals and protect cells from damage. Vitamin C, vitamin E and other phytochemicals found in fruits and vegetables are potent antioxidants that may help combat oxidative stress in the brain. A diet rich in colorful fruits and vegetables, such as berries, leafy greens and citrus fruits, can provide a wide array of antioxidants. B vitamins, including folate, vitamin B6 and vitamin B12, are essential for various biochemical processes in the body, including homocysteine metabolism. Elevated levels

of homocysteine, an amino acid, have been linked to an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease. B vitamins play a crucial role in converting homocysteine into harmless substances, reducing the risk of cognitive decline. Dietary sources of B vitamins include leafy greens, whole grains, nuts and fortified cereals. Curcumin, the active compound found in turmeric, has gained attention for its potential neuroprotective properties. Studies have shown that curcumin exhibits anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and anti-amyloid effects, which may help in reducing Alzheimer's-related pathologies. However, the bioavailability of curcumin is limited and research is ongoing to develop effective delivery methods. Including turmeric in cooking or considering curcumin supplements may offer some potential benefits [2].

The Mediterranean diet, inspired by the traditional eating habits of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, has been extensively studied for its health benefits. This dietary pattern emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and olive oil while limiting red meat and processed foods. The Mediterranean diet is rich in antioxidants, healthy fats and anti-inflammatory compounds, making it a promising dietary approach for brain health. Multiple studies have suggested that adherence to the Mediterranean diet is associated with a reduced risk of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease. As the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease continues to rise, understanding potential modifiable risk factors, such as nutrition, becomes increasingly crucial. While research on the nutritional influences on Alzheimer's is still evolving, the evidence points to the significance of a healthy, balanced diet in promoting brain health and reducing the risk of neurodegenerative diseases. A diet rich in antioxidants, omega-3 fatty acids and brain-boosting nutrients, along with the potential benefits of the Mediterranean diet, holds promise in the fight against Alzheimer's disease. Nonetheless, further research and clinical trials are necessary to establish concrete dietary recommendations for Alzheimer's prevention and management. In the meantime, adopting a balanced, nutrient-rich diet is likely to have a positive impact on overall health and brain function throughout life [3].

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is a debilitating neurodegenerative disorder characterized by progressive memory loss, cognitive decline and impaired daily functioning. As the global population ages, the prevalence of AD continues to rise, making it a significant public health concern. While the exact cause of AD remains elusive, research suggests that lifestyle factors, including nutrition, play a crucial role in the disease's onset and progression. This article aims to provide a comprehensive review of the current scientific evidence on the impact of nutrition on Alzheimer's disease within a 2000-word limit. The Mediterranean diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish and healthy fats, has garnered attention for its potential to reduce the risk of AD. Several studies have linked adherence to this diet with a lower risk of cognitive decline and a reduced incidence of AD. The diet's emphasis on antioxidants, anti-inflammatory compounds and omega-3 fatty acids may contribute to its neuroprotective effects [4]. The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, known for its effectiveness in managing hypertension, has also shown promise in reducing AD risk. The DASH diet encourages the consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and low-fat dairy products, while limiting sodium and saturated fats. These dietary choices may support overall brain health and reduce the risk of vascular damage linked to AD [5].

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Conclusion

The scientific evidence suggests that nutrition plays a crucial role in Alzheimer's disease risk and progression. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats and lean proteins appears to be associated with a reduced risk of AD. Specific nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants may offer neuroprotective effects, while harmful dietary factors such as saturated fats and added sugars could increase the risk of AD. However, it is essential to acknowledge that nutrition is just one aspect of AD prevention and management and a holistic approach, including physical activity, cognitive stimulation and social engagement, is necessary to promote brain health and reduce the burden of Alzheimer's disease. As the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease continues to rise, understanding the role of nutrition in its development and progression becomes increasingly crucial. A balanced and nutrient-rich diet, combined with a healthy lifestyle, holds promise for reducing the risk of cognitive decline and supporting brain health. While more research is needed to establish concrete dietary recommendations and therapeutic interventions, current evidence suggests that making informed dietary choices may offer a powerful tool in the fight against Alzheimer's disease.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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