More Evidence Shows Healthy Diets May Protect Brain Function

For men, daily helpings of fruits and veggies is associated with a lower risk of decline in memory and thinking skills.

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Long-term intake of leafy greens, red and dark-orange vegetables, berries and orange juice could help men avert cognitive impairment, according to a new study published in the journal Neurology, reports Medical News Today.

For the assessment, researchers from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston reviewed detailed surveys provided every four years by about 28,000 men about their food and drink intake. (The inquiry started in 1986 when participants were an average age of 51 and ended in 2012 when the men were, on average, in their mid- to late 70s.)

In addition, scientists tested the men's thinking and memory skills in 2008 and at the end of the study via subjective cognitive function (SCF) tests, which can reveal a decline in memory and thinking before these problems appear in objective tests.

Researchers divided the men into five groups based on their fruit and vegetable consumption. Those who ate the most vegetables consumed about six servings daily compared with two servings among the individuals in the group who ate the least veggies. When it came to fruits, those in the top group ate nearly three servings per day, while those in the bottom group chowed down only half a serving.

Findings show that, in general, men who consumed the most vegetables performed better on the SCF tests than those who ate less. Additionally, these participants were less likely to report experiencing a reduction in memory. Among men who drank orange juice daily, 47 percent were less likely to post poor scores on the subjective tests compared with those who drank the beverage once each month. (Men who ate the most fruit per day were also less likely to show subpar scores on their SCF exams.)

Although the study doesn't necessarily indicate that consumption of fruits, vegetables and orange juice lessens memory loss, there appears to be a relationship between the amount of these foods consumed and the preservation of memory and thinking skills.

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