

Whole Grains Linked to Lower Level of Cognitive Decline in Black Americans

Bread, pasta, rice and other whole grain foods helped protect older Black adults from cognitive decline.

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Increasing daily consumption of whole grains may reduce the risk of cognitive decline in older African Americans, according to study findings published in [Neurology](#).

Researchers at RUSH University Medical Center found that Black people who consumed more daily servings of whole grains such as breads, pasta, rice, crackers and quinoa experienced lower levels of memory decline, according to a [RUSH News release](#).

[Alzheimer's disease](#) and other [dementias](#) impact Black Americans at higher rates than other groups. In fact, [older Black Americans](#) are not only twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's disease compared with older white Americans, but they are often diagnosed at later stages, when cognitive function has already been impaired, thus diminishing quality of life.

The study involved about 3,300 people without dementia with an average age of 75; about 60% of them were Black. After a follow-up period of about six years on average, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire about their diets and underwent two or more cognitive assessments.

Black people who reported eating more servings of whole grains had slower decline in global cognition, perceptual speed and episodic memory, almost equal to being 8.5 years younger, but notably, the same was not true among white adults.

In the news release, study author Xiaoran Liu, PhD, an assistant professor of Internal Medicine at RUSH Medical College in Chicago, noted, "Previous evidence suggests eating whole grain was protective of heart disease and [African Americans] are more likely to develop heart disease." This may be a contributing factor in why we saw more of a benefit in African Americans."

Cardiovascular disease is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. What's more, Black people are more likely to develop cardiovascular diseases, which are linked to worse cognitive outcomes. Whole grains have a range of benefits, including reducing the [risk for cancer](#) and cardiovascular diseases.

“Whole grains are rich in vitamin B and E and other antioxidants. They have a lot of fiber, which has been linked to a lot of health benefits, particularly related to brain health,” Liu said.

To learn more, click [#Memory Loss](#) or [#Diet](#). There, you’ll find headlines such as “[Older Black Americans Face Higher Dementia Rates](#),” “[Daily Multivitamin May Enhance Memory in Older Adults](#)” and “[Alzheimer’s Disease and African Americans: What You Need to Know](#).”

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