



Mediterranean diet could reduce dementia risks

Adopting a Mediterranean diet, which has extra virgin olive oil at its core, could reduce the risk of developing some forms of dementia, according to a study published in July by the Journal of the American Medical Association.

The eight-year investigation analyzed 196,383 participants in the UK Biobank, a health research resource, from 2006 to 2010 and were followed until 2016 or 2017. Each participant was of European ancestry, aged at least 60 and had no signs or symptoms of dementia at the start.

Grouped by lifestyle factors, each participant was also classified as a high, medium or low genetic risk based on known genetic markers. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia, which is a broad term for brain diseases that cause long-term cognitive decline.

Adults at a high risk who undertook at least 150 minutes of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week, consumed alcohol in moderation, and ate a healthy diet like that in the Mediterranean, had a 32 percent lower risk of developing dementia.

Participants with an unhealthy lifestyle were almost three times more likely to develop the incurable memory disease, which is expected to affect 82 million people worldwide by 2030, according to the World Health Organization.

"Many people are worried about developing dementia," notes the study's co-author Dr Elżbieta Kuzma, a research fellow in neuroepidemiology at the University of Exeter Medical School. She adds, "[The study] is a very optimistic public health message because you can't change your genes, but you can change your lifestyle."

The Mediterranean diet, which includes a high consumption of vegetables, nuts, fish and extra virgin olive oil, has regularly been praised for its numerous health benefits by scientists in published studies. Unlike the Western diet, it avoids red and processed meats, dairy, trans and saturated fats, and refined sugars.

One of the key nutrients of the diet is oleic acid and it is found naturally in many food sources, most notably in extra virgin olive oil—boasting a range of 55-83% of this beneficial monosaturated fatty acid. Among all available olive oils, Italian varieties are said to contain the highest level of this beneficial acid.

The international TAICHI project is spreading the word about the health benefits of using extra virgin olive oil for cooking to Mainland China and Taiwan.

Co-funded by the EU and promoted by the two main consortia of Italian olive growers, Italia Olivicola and UNAPOL, the TAICHI project offers consumers all the information they need to understand olive oil through its website, various social media platforms and OurOliveOil APP – available in the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

Sources:

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To find out more about the TAICHI project, visit OurOliveOil.com

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