



## **Mediterranean diet may give diabetics improved memory**

**Eating a Mediterranean diet, which includes extra virgin olive oil as an essential ingredient, may give improved memory function to adults with diabetes, according to a two-year US study.**

Published in May by the American Diabetes Association's medical journal *Diabetes Care*, the study looked for associations between a Mediterranean diet and better cognitive function among adults with type 2 diabetes—the most common form of the chronic medical condition, which occurs when the pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin or the body fails to properly use the insulin produced.

Over the course of two years, researchers tracked the eating habits of 913 middle-aged and older (45–75 years) Puerto Rican adults living in the northeast American city of Boston and administered several neuropsychological examinations to test memory and executive functions.

The prevalence of cognitive impairment among the Puerto Rican population on the US mainland is higher in individuals with type 2 diabetes than without. The group also has a proven poorer diet quality and is less likely to achieve glycemic control, a medical term referring to the typical levels of blood sugar (glucose) in diabetics, than non-Hispanic whites.

People without diabetes, who were also following the Mediterranean diet, only experienced a positive change in memory function. However, the diabetic participants exhibited bigger improvements in global cognitive function, word recognition, clock drawing and the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) than those who didn't follow the diet.

The Mediterranean diet, which includes a high consumption of vegetables, nuts, fish and extra virgin olive oil, has regularly been praised 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 diet's key nutrients 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 olive oils are said to contain the highest level of this beneficial acid.

Lead study author Josiemer Mattei told Reuters that nutrients in the Mediterranean diet help sustain cognitive function by reducing inflammation and oxidation in the brain. He added that when people do have diabetes, the diet may help keep blood sugar well controlled and improve cognitive function.

While specific to the dietary and cultural context of the Puerto Rican participants, the study did state that the results are relevant to other populations. Approximately 425 million adults are living with diabetes around the world and the figure is projected to surpass 629 million by 2045. At present, almost 110 million adults in China and two million others in Taiwan currently live with diabetes.

The international TAICHI project is spreading information 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](#).



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