

# NUTRITION NEWS

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## Alzheimer's Awareness Month



November is Alzheimer Disease Awareness Month. While there is no specific recommended diet to prevent Alzheimer's Disease, some studies suggest that following a Mediterranean diet may offer some protective benefits. Research has suggested the following links between the development of Alzheimer's Disease in individuals who closely follow a Mediterranean diet.

- ◆ Slower cognitive decline in adults
- ◆ Reduces the risk of mild cognitive impairment, which is a transitional stage between the cognitive decline of normal aging and the more serious memory problems seen in dementia and Alzheimer's Disease
- ◆ Reduces the risk of mild cognitive impairment progressing into Alzheimer's Disease
- ◆ Slows the progression of Alzheimer's Disease and prevent disease related deaths

Although it's unclear why following a Mediterranean diet may protect brain function, it is clear that this diet offers additional health benefits as well. A traditional Mediterranean diet may reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer, and Parkinson's Disease. While the diet recognizes the importance of being physically active and enjoying meals with friends and family, its key components are as follows:

- ◆ Eating primarily plant based foods, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts
- ◆ Replacing butter with healthy fats, such as olive oil
- ◆ Using herbs and spices instead of salt to flavor foods
- ◆ Limiting red meat to no more than a few times a month
- ◆ Eating fish and poultry at least twice a week
- ◆ Drinking red wine in moderation (optional)

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### Monthly Exercise:

#### Neck Stretch

Keep feet at shoulder – width apart. Keep hands kept relaxed at the sides.

Turn head to either side slowly without tipping it forward or backward.

Once you feel it stretch, hold position for 15-30 seconds. Repeat with other side.

4-5 reps recommended.

As mentioned, nuts are part of the Mediterranean diet. Nuts are generally high in fat but most of the fat is considered heart healthy. Because nuts are also high in calories, they should not be eaten in large quantities. And candied or honey-roasted nuts, as well as those that are heavily salted, should be limited.

The focus of the Mediterranean diet isn't limiting total fat consumption but rather it's about choosing fats that are heart healthy. Saturated fats and hydrogenated oils (trans fats) are discouraged, as they may both contribute to developing heart disease. Olive oil is the primary source of fat.

"Extra-virgin" and "virgin" olive oils are the least processed forms and also contain the highest levels of protective plant compounds that add antioxidants.

Canola oil (although it does contain unsaturated fats) also contains linolenic acid, which is beneficial. Fatty fish (which is incorporated into the Mediterranean diet) are rich sources of omega 3 fatty acids. These fish include mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, albacore tuna, and salmon. Omega 3 fatty acids lower triglycerides, decrease blood clotting, and are associated with decreased incidence of sudden heart attacks. They also improve the health of your blood vessels and can moderate your blood pressure.

November is also American Diabetes Month. People with diabetes are at increased risk of a number of health complications. These include vision loss, heart disease, stroke, kidney failure, amputation of toes feet or legs, and premature death. As with most diseases, prevention is key. And if you are at increased risk of developing diabetes, prevention is even more important. The

Mayo Clinic recommends the following five ways to prevent becoming a diabetic.

1. Get more physical activity: not only can it help you lose weight and lower your blood sugar, it can also make you more sensitive to insulin, which is the hormone that regulates your blood sugar.
2. Get plenty of fiber: it promotes weight loss as well as improving blood sugar control.
3. Go for whole grains; although the mechanism isn't clear, whole grains reduce your risk of developing diabetes.
4. Lose extra weight: every pound you lose can improve your health!
5. Skip fad diets and just make healthier choices: giving up whole groups of food may mean you're missing nutrients too!

While diabetics by definition have difficulties controlling their blood sugars, sugars are no longer the nutrient that we focus on when educating diabetics about their diet and intake. Carbohydrates are the food component that need to be the most closely monitored in maintaining good blood sugar control. Carbohydrates are all eventually broken down into sugars in the body. Therefore, while they are our main energy source, they do need to be regulated and often times limited in diabetics.



Carbohydrates are found in the foods that you may associate with “the bread group”. These foods include breads, cereals (both hot and cold), potatoes, rice, and pasta. Carbohydrates are also found in fruit and fruit juices. Lastly, carbohydrates are found (although in slightly smaller amounts) in milk and milk products.

Most diabetics can safely consume 12-15 servings of carbohydrates daily. Ideally, these servings should be evenly spaced throughout the day. An example would be consuming 4 servings of carbohydrates at each of 3 meals and then having a couple of snacks throughout the day consisting of 1-2 servings of carbs paired with a protein. The reason for these snack choices will be explained later in the newsletter.

But what is considered a serving? A serving of carbohydrates consists of 15 grams. Examples of one serving include one slice of bread, 1/2 cup cooked cereal, 3/4 cup cold cereal, 1/2 cup cooked rice, 1/2 cup cooked pasta, or 1/2 cup cooked potatoes. Other foods to be aware of are a few starchy vegetables, such as corn and peas. 1/2 cup of either of these vegetables are also considered one serving.

Since fruit is also rich in carbohydrates, it is important to define what a serving of fruit is as well. Be aware that fruit is not only allowed in a diabetic diet, it is encouraged. It still has vitamins, minerals, and fiber. And it is low in calories and fat. It is important to count it in with your daily serving of carbs however. A serving is generally one small piece of fruit. Examples include a small orange, apple, or pear. If you prefer canned fruit, seek out the fruits canned in their own juices as opposed to those canned in syrup. 1/2 cup of canned fruit is considered a serving. Bananas are the exception. Since bananas are particularly dense, one banana is actually considered two servings of carbohydrates.

It is important for diabetics to consume adequate carbohydrates, especially if they are on insulin. For this reason, snacks are important, especially a bedtime snack. A snack consisting of a carbohydrate couple with protein is ideal. The carbohydrate will bring your blood sugar up to a safe level for the hours that you sleep throughout the night. If you skip the protein, it is easy for your blood sugar to spike quickly and then fall to a dangerously low level as well. The protein helps stabilize your blood sugar to keep you steady throughout the night. Peanut butter and crackers, cheese and crackers, a small bowl of cereal with milk, and graham crackers with a glass of milk are all good examples of an appropriate bedtime snack for diabetics.

To wrap up, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that there are currently 37.5 million people in the United States with diabetes. This is an increase from 26 million in 2010. Even more alarming, one in four people with diabetes don't even know that they have it! Following these guidelines can not only reduce your risk of developing diabetes but are appropriate for simply improving your overall health.



Here is a recipe that fits in well with the Mediterranean diet that was discussed. It is also appropriate for diabetics~

**Mediterranean Vegetable Stew**

- 2 tbs olive oil, divided**
- 1 cup chopped red onion**
- 2 cups coarsely chopped green pepper**
- 2 large garlic cloves, crushed**
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms**
- 1 small eggplant, unpeeled, cut in 1- to 2-inch chunks**
- 1 (28 ounce) can crushed tomatoes**

- 1/2 cup Kalamata olives, pitted and sliced**
- 1 (15 ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed**

- 1 tbs chopped fresh rosemary**
- 1 cup coarsely chopped parsley**

In a large skillet, heat 1 tbs oil. Saute onion and pepper until soft, about 10 minutes. Add 1 tbs oil, garlic, mushrooms, and eggplant. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until eggplant is softened but not mushy, about 15 minutes. Add tomatoes, olives, chickpeas, and rosemary. Simmer until heated through, about 10 minutes. Stir in parsley. Sprinkle feta cheese over stew if desired.

Here's a fun seasonal recipe!

**Pumpkin Fluff**

- 1 (15 ounce) can pumpkin puree
- 1 (8 ounce) container Cool Whip
- 1 (3.4 ounce) package instant vanilla pudding
- 6 tsp sugar
- 1/2 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 1/4 tsp vanilla

Mix together all ingredients until well blended. Serve with apple slices or graham crackers.



**HEAP**

If you received HEAP last year but have not yet received an application for this year, please call our Office at 867-1195.

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