

A healthier today RUSH Generations and a vital tomorrow



→ Your Health

Eating for Better Cognitive Performance



Klodian Dhana, MD, PhD
Assistant professor,
Division of Geriatrics
and Palliative Medicine

Researchers at RUSH University Medical Center have found that older adults may benefit from a specific diet — the MIND diet — independently of the protein deposits in the brain that are the hallmark of Alzheimer’s disease.*

Developed by the late RUSH nutritional epidemiologist Martha Clare Morris, ScD, and her colleagues, the MIND diet is a hybrid of the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets. Previous research studies have found that the MIND diet may reduce a person’s risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.

Maintaining cognitive function

The RUSH researchers’ study showed that participants with a higher MIND diet score had better cognitive performance before death, and that this association was independent of brain protein deposits known as plaques and tangles.

“Some people have enough plaques and tangles in their brains to have a postmortem diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease, but they do not develop clinical

dementia in their lifetime,” said **Klodian Dhana, MD, PhD**, assistant professor in the Division of Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine in the Department of Internal Medicine at RUSH Medical College.

“Some have the ability to maintain cognitive function despite the accumulation of these pathologies in the brain, and our study suggests that the MIND diet is associated with better cognitive functions independently of brain pathologies related to Alzheimer’s disease.”

Brain-healthy foods

The researchers gave each study participant a MIND diet score based on how often the participants reported eating specific foods. The MIND diet has 15 dietary components, including 10 “brain-healthy” food groups and five unhealthy groups (red meat; butter and stick margarine; cheese; pastries and sweets; fried or fast food).

Adhering to and benefiting from the MIND diet means eating at least three servings of whole grains, a green leafy vegetable and one other vegetable every day; snacking most days on nuts; having beans every other day or so; and eating poultry and berries at least twice a week and fish at least once a week.

The diet also limits intake of foods designated as unhealthy: less than one tablespoon a day of butter and less than five servings a week of sweets and pastries; less than four servings a week of red meat; and less than one serving a week of full-fat cheese and fried or fast food.

“We found that a higher MIND diet score was associated with better memory and thinking skills independently of Alzheimer’s disease pathology and other common age-related brain pathologies. The diet seemed to have a protective capacity and may contribute to cognitive resilience in the elderly,” Dhana says.

*The study used data from the Rush Memory and Aging Project, a clinical-pathologic study in Chicagoland; findings were published in the *Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease* in 2021.

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Join us on July 12 for a discussion on neurological issues in aging. See the calendar insert for details.

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Recognizing Signs of Depression in Men



Michael Hanak, MD
Family medicine
physician

Men are less likely than women to develop depression — but they're also less likely to recognize the signs and seek help for it.

“Generally speaking, men tend to be less open about their health problems, including depression,” says **Michael Hanak, MD**, a family medicine physician at RUSH. “But if you avoid the problem and don't seek treatment, it tends to get worse.”

Getting help is especially important for older men, who have a higher risk of depression than their younger counterparts.

“You may feel overwhelmed with medical expenses, or that you don't want to be a burden to others,” Hanak says. “Don't let those things silence you.”

Recognizing the signs

Before you can talk about depression, though, you have to recognize the problem. And men's symptoms may differ from the symptoms women experience.

Men and women with depression can both experience fatigue, loss of interest in everyday activities, changes in appetite or weight and difficulty remembering details or concentrating.

But men are particularly likely to have the following symptoms as well:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Sexual performance problems
- Increased irritability and aggressiveness

Men are also more likely to self-medicate with drugs or alcohol. “If you notice someone is drinking more than usual and has become more withdrawn, that's often a sign of depression,” Hanak says.

Getting help

If you or a loved one has any of these symptoms, talk to a doctor. Primary care doctors and geriatricians can do tests to rule out other conditions, such as thyroid disorders, that often cause depression-like symptoms.

They can also screen you for depression and, if necessary, refer you to a therapist or a psychiatrist for further evaluation and treatment.

Getting — and staying — better

Depending on your preferences and the severity of your depression, you may need lifestyle changes, therapy, medications or a combination of these things.

Hanak also recommends staying socially active, which can help prevent depression in the first place.

“Make a plan, especially if you're not working,” he says. “Ask yourself, ‘How are you going to spend your time?’ ‘Who are the people you're going to spend time with?’ That's the best way to ward off depression and maximize your well-being later in life.”

Join us on Aug. 23 for a discussion on mental health and aging. See the calendar insert for details.



What Matters: Staying Independent

Remaining independent tops the list of what matters for many older adults. When people experience physical or cognitive challenges to living independently, they often feel like their living circumstances are out of their control — but there are effective ways to work on maintaining independence. Experts on healthy aging offer the following tips:

- **Stay active, physically and mentally.** Twenty to 30 minutes of daily physical activity is a healthy goal. And activities like doing crossword puzzles, reading or learning a new skill help maintain mental fitness.
- **Stay social.** Connecting with friends and family has many health benefits — and so does making new friends. Consider a volunteer gig or senior center programs as a way to meet others with similar interests.
- **Visit your doctor.** Keeping up to date with medical appointments and taking prescribed medication helps maintain good health. Talking with your health care providers about your goals (like living independently) can help them assist you in making a plan for success.
- **Ask for help when you need it.** Being independent doesn't mean you need to do everything on your own. Give yourself permission to ask for and accept help, especially when you're concerned about safety.

Visit Schaalman Senior Voices at aging.rush.edu/Schaalman to hear older adults discuss what matters most to them. If you'd like to share your thoughts about staying independent, we invite you to record a 60-second video here: bit.ly/RecordMyStory.

Understanding Allergies



Do you blow your nose and rub your itchy eyes more than usual during warm weather? Chances are you have hay fever, also called allergic rhinitis — an allergic response that has absolutely nothing to do with hay and everything to do with tiny particles wafting through the air.

Christopher Codispoti, MD, PhD
Allergy and immunology specialist

Seasonal rises in tree, grass and weed pollens trigger seasonal allergic rhinitis in many of us, with symptoms of runny nose, sneezing, congestion, postnasal drip and itchy, watery eyes. And perennial allergic rhinitis affects millions year-round thanks to mold spores, dust mites, pet dander and even cockroaches. (It's gross, but true: The insects' saliva and feces can trigger asthma and allergies.)

Year-round triggers mean that the prolonged cold you thought you had in January could actually have been hay fever, says **Christopher Codispoti, MD, PhD**, an allergy and immunology specialist at RUSH University Medical Center.

And, he says, while most people get diagnosed with allergies as children, it's possible to get an allergy diagnosis at any age — including over age 50.

Is it an allergy or a cold?

Allergic reactions occur when the immune system overreacts to something like pollen or mold (i.e., allergens) because it confuses the allergen with a germ. The differences between colds and allergies include the following:

- A cold is a virus, which is contagious. An allergy isn't contagious, but is the body's unique immune reaction to the environment — so allergies can't be spread from one person to another.
- While some symptoms of colds and allergies are similar (runny nose, fatigue, watery eyes), others are not. For example, colds produce fevers and mild body aches; allergies don't.

- People with colds typically recover in a few weeks, whereas allergy sufferers endure symptoms for as long as they're exposed to the allergen.

See a specialist for testing

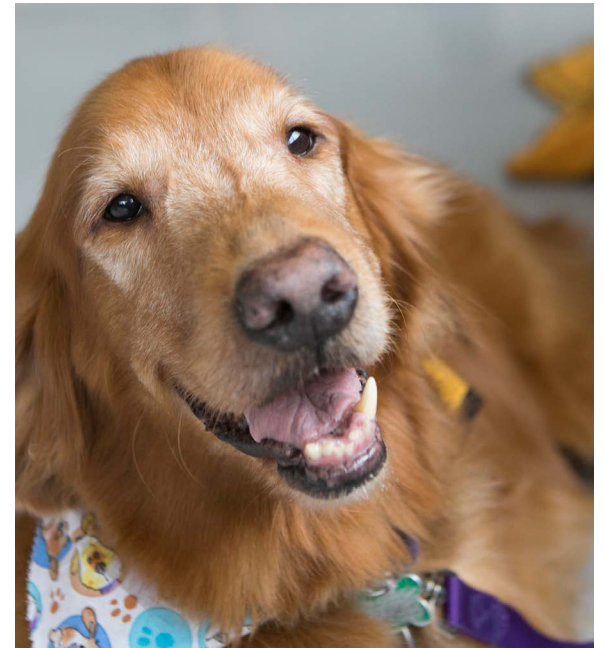
If you and your primary care provider suspect that you have allergies, a referral to a specialist in allergy and immunology might be the next step.

Your allergist will do a thorough physical exam and talk to you about your history of allergy symptoms. They may use skin tests or blood tests to try to identify what's causing your reactions.

While skin tests are typically more helpful than blood tests in determining the root cause of allergies, some providers use blood tests to assess responses to specific allergens, including foods as well as airborne particles.

The idea behind these blood tests: Our immune systems release immunoglobulins, or antibodies, to detect foreign molecules. If levels of a particular type of immunoglobulin are high, you may have an allergy — but an allergist will want to establish a definite relationship between the test results and clinical symptoms before diagnosing any kind of allergy.

Many people with positive blood test results walk away thinking they have to make major lifestyle changes, such as giving up favorite foods or parting ways with a beloved pet. But this isn't necessarily true.



The truth about cats and dogs

Are there really hypoallergenic dogs and cats? While that's a comforting thought for many allergy-suffering pet lovers, it just isn't true, Codispoti says. Problematic animal allergens arise from pets' saliva and skin, not their hair. "While you can reduce the spread of dander — skin that sheds — by shaving, bathing and vacuuming, you can't totally control it," Codispoti says. "And keeping dogs and cats from licking — either themselves or others — is pretty impossible. It's how cats and dogs bathe." Allergy sufferers with pets can make changes to improve their symptoms, such as limiting where pets are allowed in their homes and keeping them out of the bedroom.

In general, Codispoti offers the following advice about allergies: If you test positive for an allergen but don't have symptoms like sneezing, wheezing or headaches, you don't have to alter how you live. And if you do have symptoms, your allergist will help you find the right treatment.

Join us on July 26 for a discussion on allergies and asthma. See the calendar insert for details.

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(800) 757-0202



PLEASE NOTE: All physicians featured in this publication are on the medical staff of RUSH. Some of the physicians are in private practice and, as independent practitioners, are not employees or agents of RUSH. RUSH is an academic health system comprising RUSH University Medical Center, RUSH Copley Medical Center and RUSH Oak Park Hospital.

Three Ways To Boost Gut Health

The bacteria that live in your gastrointestinal tract make up your gut flora, or microbiota. Keeping these bacteria in balance aids in digestion; it can also protect against inflammation and conditions like gastrointestinal disorders and colorectal cancer. Adding probiotics, prebiotics and synbiotics to your diet can help keep your gut healthy.

1. Probiotics are live microbes that are similar to the “friendly bacteria,” that inhabit your gut. Research suggests they may help maintain healthful bacteria and might also support immune health. One of the best-known sources of probiotics is live-cultured yogurt. Other probiotic-rich foods include green pickles, miso soup, sauerkraut, kimchi and tempeh.

- 2. Prebiotics** are nondigestible carbohydrates that stimulate the growth of friendly bacteria and help protect the gut from unfriendly bacteria. They’re found in a variety of raw foods, including garlic, Jerusalem artichokes, leeks, onions and wheat bran; they’re also added to many food products, including fiber bars, cereals and yogurt.
- 3. Synbiotic** products, such as kefir (a fermented milk drink), include both probiotics and prebiotics — live bacteria along with substances that help healthy bacteria grow.

Most people can safely add these foods to their diet, but talk to your primary care provider first — especially if you’re immunocompromised.

**Join us on Aug. 9 for a discussion on gut health.
See the calendar insert for details.**

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Summer 2023 Free Health and Aging Events

The following lectures will be held virtually.
You can view them online or listen to them via phone.

For updates on RUSH Generations programs, sign up
for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.



To join these lectures online,

visit the RUSH Generations
YouTube page at the time
of the event:

cutt.ly/RushGenYouTube.



To dial in via phone (audio only),

call **(312) 626-6799** at the
time of the event and enter
meeting ID 413 655 0125#.

July

Neurological Issues in Aging

Wednesday, July 12

1 to 2:30 p.m.

Come hear from our experts about common changes associated with aging and ways to maintain and monitor brain health as we age. We'll also discuss some of the latest innovations in treatment for Parkinson's disease and epilepsy, and share available resources for older adults and caregivers.

Allergies and Asthma

Wednesday, July 26

1 to 2:30 p.m.

Older adults face different challenges than younger people when living with asthma. Join us for an informative lecture on prevention and treatment of asthma and other respiratory health issues that affect older adults.

August

Gut Health

Wednesday, Aug. 9

1 to 2:30 p.m.

The gut is often called the body's "second brain," with connections between the gut and the brain, playing a key role in some medical conditions, as well as overall health. Join our experts as they discuss the importance of digestive health and ways to improve it.

Mental Health and Aging

Wednesday, Aug. 23

1 to 2:30 p.m.

Anxiety and depression are common mental health issues among older adults — and it's crucial to address them, because mental health is as important as physical health. Learn more about these conditions, along with strategies for treatment, from a RUSH geriatrician and psychiatrist.

September

Medicare 101

Wednesday, Sept. 6

1 to 2:30 p.m.

Whether you're new to Medicare or want to be sure you're getting the most out of the program, join us to learn about your benefits. Just in time for the upcoming Medicare enrollment period, we'll share the latest updates on the program's health and prescription drug insurance coverage.

Falls Prevention Awareness

Wednesday, Sept. 20

1 to 2:30 p.m.

Falls are the No. 1 reason for emergency room visits and hospitalizations for older adults. In this special National Falls Awareness Month program, experts will share tips for improving your balance and staying safe during the upcoming winter months.

Classes and Workshops

These classes and workshops are a mix of Zoom and in-person events.

To participate in Zoom events, you'll need internet access and the Zoom app on a computer, tablet or smartphone with a webcam. Please call **(800) 757-0202** and be ready to provide a valid phone number and email address so we can send you a Zoom link. If you don't have access to Zoom but would like to join a self-guided version of a workshop with a weekly conference call check-in, please call **(800) 757-0202**.

To participate in in-person events, pre-registration is required. Please call **(800) 757-0202** to reserve your spot.

For updates from RUSH Generations, sign up for our emails at bit.ly/RushGenerations.

Classes

Gentle Chair Yoga (Zoom)
Thursdays, July 27 to Sept. 14
11 a.m. to noon
\$40 for the eight-class session

Mindfulness 101 (Zoom)
Fridays, Aug. 4 to Aug. 25
1 to 2 p.m.
\$20 for the four-class session

Embracing Aging (Zoom)
Mondays, Aug. 14 to Oct. 9
(no class on Monday, Sept. 4)
1 to 2 p.m.
\$40 for the eight-class session

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention (Zoom)
Wednesdays and Fridays,
Sept. 27 to Nov. 22
11 a.m. to noon

Gentle Chair Yoga (Zoom)
Thursdays, Sept. 28 to Nov. 16
1 to 2 p.m.
\$40 for the eight-class session

Workshops

Bingocize (in person)
Tuesdays and Thursdays,
July 11 to Sept. 21
10 to 11 a.m.

Armour Academic Center
610 S. Paulina St., Suite 1096
Chicago, IL 60612

Call (800) 757-0202 to register

Take Charge of Your Health (Zoom)
Tuesdays, Aug. 8 to Sept. 19
10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Learning To Live Well With Chronic Pain (Zoom)
Mondays, Aug. 14 to Sept. 25
2 to 4:30 p.m.

Vivir una Mejor Vida a Pesar del Dolor Crónico (Zoom)
Los jueves, 17 de agosto hasta el 28 de septiembre
10 a.m. a 12:30 p.m.

Take Charge of Your Health (in person)
Thursdays, Sept. 7 to Oct. 12
9:30 a.m. to noon

Johnston R. Bowman Health Center
710 S. Paulina St., Suite 316
Chicago, IL 60612

Call (800) 757-0202 to register

Both RUSH University Medical Center and RUSH Oak Park Hospital comply with applicable federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

Español (Spanish)

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

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繁體中文 (Chinese)

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ગુજરાતી (Gujarati)

સૂચના: જો તમે ગુજરાતી બોલતા હો, તો નિ:શુલ્ક ભાષા સહાય સેવાઓ તમારા માટે ઉપલબ્ધ છે. ફોન કરો 1-312-563-2987 (TTY: 1-312-563-2987).

اُردُو (Urdu)

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λληνικά (Greek)

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