COGNITIVE HEALTH AND IMPAIRMENT

A Mediterranean diet reduced the risk of cognitive impairment and dementia, and was associated with improved cognitive functioning.

**What is the effect?**

- Different cognitive function tests were used between studies, making the findings difficult to compare.
- Most studies were observational and did not adjust for important confounders.
- Given that many participants showed signs of memory impairment, the retrospective studies and the use of a Food Frequency questionnaire could give a distorted account of foods eaten.
- It is unclear whether the Mediterranean diet is protective as a whole or through the action of its individual components.
- The same adherence score to a Mediterranean diet can mean a high and low consumption of different foods.
- Nine studies included participants <65 years of age, which could make cognitive decline harder to detect.
- The type of tool used to measure adherence to a Mediterranean diet varied between studies, and 7 studies modified the Mediterranean diet, which could give a distorted account of foods eaten.

**Limitations**

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**What is the evidence?**

- A Mediterranean diet reduced the risk of cognitive impairment and dementia. Studies included are observational and randomized controlled trials (RCTs).
- 6 of 9 studies (2 of 2 cross-sectional and 4 of 7 longitudinal) found the Mediterranean diet to be protective, and the other 3 studies did not find a significant association.
- A Mediterranean diet is protective for Dementia.
- A Mediterranean diet is protective for Cognitive Impairment.
- A Mediterranean diet is protective for Cognitive Function: a global cognitive and verbal ability.

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