# Dietary changes may enhance longevity and cognitive health, study suggests



A growing body of research is highlighting the significant impact of diet on longevity and cognitive health, suggesting that dietary modifications could enhance both lifespan and mental acuity. Dr Federica Amati, a nutritional scientist and guest on the "Begin Again with Davina McCall" podcast, has indicated that altering one's eating habits, particularly around the age of 40, may extend life by an extraordinary 11 years.

Dr Amati outlined the connection between diet and dementia risk, asserting that the timing of dietary changes is crucial. "You don't feel great if you're having too much of one thing," she remarked, emphasising the importance of balanced nutrition. She drew attention to studies demonstrating that adopting a Mediterranean-style diet—rich in oily fish, olive oil, seeds, and vegetables—can significantly reduce the likelihood of developing dementia.

Exploring the findings from a recent study, Dr Amati explained that those who change their diet by age 40 can potentially gain 11 years of life. The research also points to benefits of dietary changes later in life, stating, “if you elevate your diet from standard to something that's more Mediterranean... you can add 6 years to your life,” a finding that underlines the benefits of shifting dietary patterns at any age.

Dr Amati reiterated that beneficial dietary changes can be made regardless of when one starts. She noted, "Any change you make at any age is going to make a difference to how you feel today and tomorrow and for your long-term health." This pragmatic approach to diet advocates for consistency rather than perfection, encouraging individuals to integrate healthier choices into their daily lives.

In a related study presented at the American Society for Nutrition conference, the dietary habits of over 3,000 UK adults were analysed in conjunction with their cognitive performance. Participants' diets were classified according to their nutritional quality, revealing a significant correlation between high-quality diets—characterised by ample vegetable intake—and superior cognitive function by age 69. The research indicated that those with poor memory test scores were predominately linked to low-quality dietary patterns, revealing the profound effects diet can have on mental performance.

Separately, research led by Dr Huping Li from Tianjin Medical University in China examined the relationship between fast food consumption and dementia risk. This study found that unhealthy dietary habits, particularly those involving ultra-processed foods, could lead to damage in blood vessels and increased inflammation in the brain, thereby heightening dementia risk. Dr Li cautioned against the consumption of fried and heavily processed foods, linking them to cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline.

The British Heart Foundation further elaborated on the potential dangers of ultra-processed foods, which often contain additives not typically found in home cooking and may hinder cognitive performance. They cited various examples, such as ice cream, sausages, and soft drinks, that fall within this category and suggested a need for a more balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables.

The implications of these studies are significant, reinforcing the notion that dietary choices made throughout life play a crucial role in health outcomes. Dr Li posited that shifting from ultra-processed foods to healthier options could decrease the risk of dementia, further supporting the idea that making informed dietary choices can have lasting benefits.

As more research continues to emerge, the understanding of the relationship between diet and both longevity and cognitive health grows ever clearer, providing a foundation for ongoing discussions about diet and well-being at all stages of life.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/healthandwellbeing/arid-41401441.html> - This article supports Dr. Federica Amati's emphasis on the impact of dietary changes on longevity, highlighting that switching to a Mediterranean-style diet can add years to one's life. It also discusses the importance of balanced nutrition and the benefits of adopting healthier eating habits.
* <https://zoe.com/learn/podcast-foods-for-every-stage-of-life> - This podcast episode with Dr. Federica Amati explores life-course nutrition, emphasizing how dietary changes at different stages of life can significantly impact health and longevity. It highlights the benefits of adopting a 'longevity diet pattern' around midlife.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koMZSBeFWsA> - In this podcast episode, Dr. Federica Amati discusses the science behind eating for lifelong health, emphasizing the importance of nutrition at every stage of life. She highlights the benefits of balanced diets rich in fruits and vegetables.
* <https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/heart-matters-magazine/nutrition/ultra-processed-foods> - The British Heart Foundation discusses the risks associated with ultra-processed foods, which can lead to cardiovascular disease and cognitive decline. This aligns with Dr. Li's research on the dangers of such foods.
* <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/risk-factors-and-prevention/diet-and-dementia> - This resource from the Alzheimer's Society discusses the link between diet and dementia risk, highlighting the benefits of a Mediterranean-style diet in reducing dementia risk, which is consistent with Dr. Amati's assertions.
* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10311201/> - Although not directly related to nutrition, this article on digital evidence in criminal cases illustrates the broader context of how scientific research and evidence-based practices are crucial in understanding health and legal issues, similar to how dietary research informs health outcomes.