

# Baycrest creates first Canadian Brain Health Food Guide for adults

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Matthew Parrott, a former RRI post-doctoral fellow, in collaboration with nutritionists involved with the Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging (CCNA), provides the best advice based on current evidence.

Research has found that dietary patterns similar to those outlined in the Brain Health Food Guide are associated with decreasing the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease by 36 per cent and mild cognitive impairment (a condition likely to develop into Alzheimer's) by 27 per cent.

The Brain Health Food Guide published by Baycrest. Credit: Baycrest Health Sciences

Baycrest scientists have led the development of the first Canadian Brain Health Food Guide to help adults over 50 preserve their thinking and memory skills as they age.

"There is increasing evidence in scientific literature that [healthy eating](#) is associated with retention of cognitive function, but there is also a lot of misinformation out there," says Dr. Carol Greenwood, co-author of the Brain Health Food Guide, senior scientist at Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute (RRI) and professor at the University of Toronto's Department of Nutritional Sciences.

There is not a lot of evidence about individual foods, but rather classes of foods, says Dr. Greenwood, who is also a co-author of Mindful, the first science-based cookbook for the brain. Older adults are encouraged to eat berries or cruciferous vegetables, such as cauliflower, cabbage and Brussels sprouts, rather than a specific type of berry or vegetable.

The easy-to-read [food guide](#), co-authored with Dr.

Foods to Include	Servings	Serving Size
<b>Vegetables Total</b>	5 or more times a day	1/2 cup
<i>Of this, be sure to include:</i>		
<b>Raw Leafy Greens</b>	1 time a day	except 1 cup for Raw Leafy Greens
<b>Cruciferous Vegetables</b>	3 times a week	
<i>(e.g. broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale, cabbage, bok choy)</i>		
<b>Fruit Total</b>	4 or more times a day	1 medium fruit or 1/2 cup
<i>Of this, be sure to include:</i>		
<b>Berries (fresh or frozen)</b>	3 times a week	
<b>Unsalted Nuts or All-natural Nut Butters Total</b>	1 time a day	1/4 cup nuts or 2 tbsp nut butter
<i>Of this, be sure to include:</i>		
<b>Walnuts</b>	4 or more times a week	
<b>Beans or Legumes</b>	2 or more times a week	1/2 cup
<i>(e.g. chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils, navy beans)</i>		
<b>Fish or Seafood Total (not battered or fried)</b>	3 times a week	3-4oz
<i>Of this, be sure to include:</i>		
<b>Fatty fish (e.g. salmon, trout, sardines)</b>	1 or more times a week	

- Choose whole grains (e.g. oats, brown rice, brown pasta, 100% whole wheat or whole grain breads, quinoa, bulgur, barley, whole grain pasta) instead of refined grains (e.g. white rice, white pasta, white bread)
- Use low-fat milk (skim or 1%), yogurt (0-2%), and cheese (about 22%)
- Use extra virgin olive oil as your main culinary oil for cooking, salad dressings, and added to bread and foods

Foods to Limit	Servings	Serving Size
<b>Any Meat and Poultry Total</b>	1 or less per day	3-4oz
<i>No more than 1 meal per day should include:</i>		
<b>Red and processed meats</b>	less than 1 per week	
<i>(e.g. beef, pork, lamb, ribs, sausages, hot dogs, jerky, cold cuts, pepperoni)</i>		
<b>Butter, cream, or high fat dairy spreads</b>	less than 1 per week	1 tsp butter 100g cream
<i>(e.g. sour cream, cream cheese)</i>		
<b>White breads</b>	1 or less per week	1 slice bread 1/2 bagel
<i>(e.g. bread, rolls, bagels, instant noodles, frozen appetizers, and entrees)</i>		
<b>Pre-packaged foods and meals</b>		
<i>(e.g. canned soup, instant noodles, frozen appetizers, and entrees)</i>		
<b>Potato chips, fries, pretzels, or other salty snacks or fried food</b>	3 or less servings per week as total for all these foods	
<b>Store-bought dairy desserts</b>	Serving sizes according to the Nutrition Facts table on the food label	
<i>(e.g. ice cream, frozen yogurt, pudding, custard)</i>		
<b>Baked goods (especially store bought)</b>		
<i>(e.g. cookies, muffins, scones, croissants, donuts, cakes, pies)</i>		
<b>Candy and chocolate</b>		
<b>Pop, sweetened fruit juice or any other sugary drink</b>		

The Brain Health Food Guide published by Baycrest (page 2) Credit: Baycrest Health Sciences

Some tips suggested by the Brain Health Food Guide include:

- Focus on an overall pattern of healthy eating, not one specific "superfood" for brain health
- Eat fish, beans and nuts several times a week
- Include healthy fats from olive oil, nuts and fish in one's diet
- Add beans or legumes to soups, stews and stir-fried foods

- Embrace balance, moderation and variety

"The Brain Health Food Guide ties day-to-day diet advice with the best available research evidence on promoting brain health to [older adults](#)," says Dr. Susan Vander Morris, a clinical neuropsychologist and lead of the Memory and Aging Program at Baycrest, a brain health workshop for healthy older adults who are concerned about memory loss. "This guide is a perfect fit for our clients seeking to proactively manage their [brain health](#) through healthy nutrition."

Provided by Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care

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