

Alzheimer's Is Preventable!

Christine Foskett • Bozeman Wellness Center

Incidences of Alzheimer's and dementia have risen steadily over the past few decades, with little information and hope for prevention. Enter David Perlmutter, MD, who explores the connection between consumption of wheat, carbs, sugar, and your brain. Dr. Perlmutter is a board-certified neurologist, Fellow of the American College of Nutrition, and a founding member of the American Board of Integrative and Holistic Medicine. Dr. Perlmutter's focus on the brain and nutrition has led him to the clear connection between a diet consisting of high levels of grain carbohydrates, low fat intake, and the increasing incidences of Alzheimer's disease.

According to Dr. Perlmutter in *Grain Brain*, there are four factors that most people who are suffering from Alzheimer's had likely developed before the disease: 1) Chronic high blood sugar levels (even in the absence of diabetes), 2) A high carbohydrate diet, 3) A low-fat diet and low cholesterol, 4) Undiagnosed sensitivity to gluten

(not necessarily celiac disease). Let's take a look.

Chronic High Blood Sugar Levels

Research has shown that having Type II diabetes doubles a person's risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. Insulin resistance (Type II diabetes) promotes the formation of brain plaques associated with Alzheimer's. These brain plaques interfere with normal brain function. Pre-diabetic, elevated blood sugar can also be detrimental to brain health. A study published in the August 2013 edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed even mildly elevated blood sugar (values of 105 or 110) were associated with a higher risk of dementia.

High Carbohydrate/Low Fat Diet

The correlations that Dr. Perlmutter has seen in his clinic between high carbohydrate, low fat diets, and incidences of brain disorders such as dementia and Alzheimer's has been supported in the literature. Research at Mayo Clinic has shown an 89% increased risk of dementia for people consuming a high-carbohydrate diet. In contrast, a diet high in fat was associated with a 44% reduced risk of dementia.

Low Fat & Cholesterol

Cholesterol's brain-protective role has been shown in the 2005 report published by the *Framingham Study*, which has studied a large group of men and women over many decades and generations. The study showed that "lower naturally occurring total cholesterol levels are associated with poor performance on cognitive measures, which placed high demand on abstract reasoning, attention/concentration, word fluency, and executive functioning." The study found, "participants with 'desirable' total cholesterol (less than 200) performed less well than participants with border-



Tips for Better Brain Health

1. Avoid sugar and refined fructose.
2. Avoid gluten and casein (primarily wheat and pasteurized dairy, but not dairy fat, such as butter).
3. Optimize your gut flora by regularly eating fermented foods or taking a high-potency and high-quality probiotic supplement.
4. Increase consumption of all healthy fats, including animal-based omega-3.
5. Reduce your overall calorie consumption and/or fast intermittently.
6. Improve your magnesium levels. Its food sources include leafy, green vegetables and blackstrap molasses.
7. Eat a nutritious diet rich in folate. Without question, vegetables are your best form of folate, and we should all eat plenty of fresh, raw veggies every day.

*Mercola.com • How to Prevent Alzheimer's Disease—
A Neurologist Speaks Out • Sept. 28, 2013*

line-high total cholesterol levels (200 to 239) and participants with high total cholesterol levels (greater than 240).”

Gluten

Our Neolithic ancestors rarely consumed grains, and when they did, it certainly did not look like modern wheat. The average American consumes 133 pounds of genetically modified, hybrid wheat that bears little resemblance to the wheat our ancestors consumed. Modern wheat contains high amounts of gluten, a sticky glue-like substance. If not broken down completely, gluten can “stick” to the lining of the small intestine. This buildup of

sticky gluten in the small intestine is a signal to your immune system to come and clean it up. During this process, inflammation, damage to the small intestine (leading to leaky gut), and elevated antibodies against the gluten protein occur. This chronic inflammation eventually affects the whole body, including the brain. Also, the gluten antibodies can attack proteins in the brain that have a similar appearance to the gluten protein. Then we have inflammation and an autoimmune-type of reaction occurring in a brain—all leading to neurological degeneration and what today we call Alzheimer’s disease. ■

Lifestyle Guidelines for Alzheimer’s Prevention

1. Exercise regularly.
2. Optimize your vitamin D levels. Sufficient vitamin D is indicated by blood levels between 50–70 ng/ml.
3. Avoid and eliminate mercury from your body. Avoid and eliminate aluminum from your body.
4. Avoid anticholinergics and statin drugs. Drugs that block

acetylcholine, a nervous system neurotransmitter, have been shown to increase your risk of dementia. These drugs include certain nighttime pain relievers, antihistamines, sleep aids, certain antidepressants, medications to control incontinence, and certain narcotic pain relievers.

5. Challenge your mind daily.

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