

MedDiet has varied effects on cognitive decline among different races

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While the Mediterranean diet may have broad health benefits, its impact on cognitive decline differs among race-specific populations, according to a new study published in the *Journal of Gerontology*.

The team of researchers, including Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU Prof. Danit R. Shahar RD, Ph.D, analyzed an NIH/NIA [prospective cohort study](#) [Health ABC] conducted over eight years in the U.S. to measure the effects of adherence to a Mediterranean diet. Prof. Shahar is affiliated with the BGU S. Daniel Abraham International Center for Health and Nutrition, Department of Public Health, Faculty of Health Sciences.

The Mediterranean-style diet (MedDiet) has fewer meat products and more plant-based foods and [monounsaturated fatty acids](#) from olive and canola oil (good) than a typical American diet.

To assess the association between MedDiet score and brain function, the researchers used data of several Modified Mini-Mental State Examinations (3MS) on 2,326 participating older adults (70-79). The 3MS is an extensively used and validated instrument designed to measure several cognitive domains to screen for cognitive impairment and commonly used to screen for dementia.

"In a population of initially well-functioning older adults, we found a significant correlation between strong adherence to the Mediterranean diet and a slower rate of cognitive decline among African American, but not white, older adults. Our study is the first to show a possible race-specific association between the Mediterranean [diet](#) and cognitive decline."

The researchers note that further studies in diverse populations are necessary to confirm association between the MedDiet and [cognitive decline](#), and to pinpoint factors that may explain these results.

More information: *Journal of Gerontology*
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24994847

Provided by American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

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