

# Words on Wellness

## The MIND Diet: Eating to Keep Your Brain Healthy



Can the food you eat help keep your brain strong as you age? Research suggests it can. The MIND diet—short for Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay—was created to support brain health and lower the risk of memory loss.

The MIND diet focuses on foods high in fiber and rich in nutrients like vitamin E, folate, omega-3 fats, and antioxidants. These nutrients protect brain cells, reduce inflammation, and support memory and learning.

Studies show that people who follow the MIND diet may have slower cognitive decline and a lower risk of Alzheimer’s disease. Even small changes can help your brain stay healthier over time.

### Brain-Friendly Foods

- Leafy greens: 6+ servings per week
- Other vegetables: 1 serving per day
- Berries: 2+ servings per week
- Nuts: 5+ servings per week
- Olive oil: main cooking oil
- Whole grains: 3+ servings per day
- Fish: 1+ serving per week
- Beans: 4+ servings per week
- Poultry: 2+ servings per week
- Wine: up to 1 glass per day (optional)

Try to eat fewer sweets, red meat, fried foods, and butter, which can increase inflammation. Small changes add up—choosing nutrient-rich foods today may help keep your mind sharp for years to come.

Source: [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](https://www.academyofnutritionanddietetics.com), [go.iastate.edu/OGKBSR](https://go.iastate.edu/OGKBSR)

## Broiled Salmon

Serving Size: 1 fillet | Serves: 4

### Ingredients:

- 4 salmon fillets (3-4 ounces each)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 whole lemon

### Directions:

1. Adjust oven rack to highest setting.
2. Preheat broiler to high. Cover a baking sheet with foil and spray with nonstick cooking spray.
3. Place salmon fillets on baking sheet. Sprinkle evenly with salt and ground black pepper.
4. Wash and cut lemon in half. Squeeze juice over the top of the salmon fillets.
5. Broil for 5-6 minutes.

### Nutrition information per serving:

170 calories, 7g total fat, 1g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 60mg cholesterol, 200mg sodium, 1g total carbohydrate, 0g fiber, 0g sugar, 23g protein  
This recipe is courtesy of ISU Extension and Outreach’s Spend Smart. Eat Smart. website. For more information, recipes, and videos, visit [Spend Smart. Eat Smart.](https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu), [spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu](https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu).



## Quick Thaw

Thawing frozen food safely is just as important as cooking it properly. When food is left to thaw at room temperature—like on the counter—it can reach the “danger zone” (40°F–140°F) where bacteria multiply quickly, even while the center is still frozen.

Use one of these safe thawing methods instead:

- 1. Refrigerator** – This is the safest method. Place food on a plate or tray to catch drips and allow 24 hours of thawing for every 5 pounds of meat.
- 2. Cold Water** – Place food in a sealed, leak-proof bag and submerge in cold water, changing the water every 30 minutes. Cook immediately after thawing.
- 3. Microwave** – Use your microwave’s defrost setting. Cook immediately after thawing.

Never thaw food on the counter or in hot water. These methods can allow harmful bacteria to grow on the surface before the inside is thawed.

Safe thawing helps preserve food quality and protects your family from foodborne illness. Plan ahead and thaw smart!

Source: [USDA](#), [go.iastate.edu/GXAXJH](https://go.iastate.edu/GXAXJH)

## Stretching for Health: Easy Exercises to Boost Flexibility

Stretching is a simple way to keep your body healthy. It can improve flexibility and make it easier to move. Stretching can also lower your risk of injuries, like strains and sprains.

Stretching increases blood flow to your muscles. This brings oxygen and nutrients into your body and can help reduce soreness.

### How to Stretch Safely

- Stretch when your muscles are warm.
  - If you’re only stretching, start with a few minutes of light walking to make sure you’re warmed up.
  - If you’re doing strength or cardio exercise, stretch at the end of your workout.
- Move slowly into each stretch and stop if you feel pain.
- Hold each stretch for 10–30 seconds and repeat 3–5 times.
- Breathe normally, avoid bouncing, and keep your joints slightly bent to prevent injury.

For simple stretching routines to do at home, visit Spend Smart. Eat Smart.® [upper and lower body stretching videos](#), [go.iastate.edu/Q6EUYK](https://go.iastate.edu/Q6EUYK). Yoga and Pilates are also great ways to improve balance, strength, and flexibility.

Adding stretching to your routine can help you move better and feel better every day. Your body will thank you!

Sources: [Mayo Clinic](#), [go.iastate.edu/LGJP2K](https://go.iastate.edu/LGJP2K)  
[American Heart Association](#), [go.iastate.edu/MOXGZB](https://go.iastate.edu/MOXGZB)

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*If you or someone you know is skipping meals, going hungry, or choosing between food and medicine, call 1-855-944-3663 to apply for assistance today.*

*Call Iowa 2-1-1 or Iowa Lifelong Links, 1-866-468-7887, for additional resources.*



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