



COGNITIVA Best Foods for Dementia & Brain Health

A practical food guide for prevention, mild cognitive change, and more advanced cognitive decline.

Food is not the whole answer, but nutrition can play an important role in brain health. For many adults, a **keto-light, lower-carb Mediterranean-style pattern** is a practical starting point for prevention. When cognitive decline becomes more advanced, some families may consider a **more therapeutic ketogenic approach** with medical supervision.

1. Best Brain Foods to Emphasize

Food / Group	Why it helps
Avocados	Rich in healthy monounsaturated fats; supportive for satiety and a lower-carb pattern.
Extra-virgin olive oil	A cornerstone fat for brain-healthy, anti-inflammatory eating.
Blueberries and other berries	Provide polyphenols and antioxidants. In stricter keto plans, use smaller portions.
Leafy greens	Spinach, arugula, kale, romaine, and similar vegetables provide folate, magnesium, and fiber.
Cruciferous vegetables	Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and cabbage fit well into both keto-light and keto plans.
Wild salmon, sardines, anchovies, and other fatty fish	Excellent sources of omega-3 fats, especially EPA and DHA.
Eggs	Provide protein, choline, and healthy fats; a practical brain-supportive staple.
Grass-fed meats and pasture-raised poultry	Provide protein, iron, zinc, and B vitamins. Choose minimally processed options.
Nuts and seeds	Walnuts, pecans, chia, flax, and pumpkin seeds can support a lower-carb eating pattern.
Olives	A simple brain-friendly fat source that fits well into keto-light and ketogenic eating.
Plain full-fat fermented dairy if tolerated	Examples include plain Greek yogurt or kefir. Prefer unsweetened forms.
Herbs, spices, tea, and cocoa	Turmeric, cinnamon, rosemary, green tea, and small amounts of dark chocolate can add polyphenols.

2. Prevention: A Keto-Light Pattern

For prevention and early brain health support, many people do well with a **keto-light, lower-carb Mediterranean-style approach**. The goal is usually not perfect ketosis, but lower sugar and starch exposure with more healthy fats, protein, and non-starchy vegetables.

What to emphasize

- Build meals around protein + healthy fat + non-starchy vegetables.
- Use olive oil generously on salads, vegetables, fish, and meats.
- Choose avocados, olives, eggs, fish, nuts, seeds, and high-quality meats regularly.
- Keep berries as the main fruit, usually in modest portions.
- Choose vegetables far more often than bread, rice, pasta, or sweets.

Foods to limit

- Sugary drinks, desserts, candy, and fruit juice.
- White bread, pasta, crackers, chips, rice, and ultra-processed snack foods.
- Large amounts of cereal, oatmeal, muffins, pastries, or “healthy” processed bars.
- Highly processed meats, frequent fast food, and seed-oil-heavy fried foods.

Simple plate idea: Fill about half the plate with non-starchy vegetables, add a good protein source (fish, eggs, chicken, beef, or tofu if appropriate), then include healthy fats such as olive oil, avocado, or olives.

3. More Advanced Cognitive Decline: A Fuller Ketogenic Approach

When dementia symptoms are more advanced, some clinicians and families consider a **more therapeutic ketogenic diet**. The purpose is usually to reduce sugar and starch intake more aggressively and rely more on fats as a fuel source. This approach is **not for everyone** and should ideally be done with clinician oversight, especially in older adults or anyone taking diabetes medications.

Common features of a fuller ketogenic plan

- Very low sugar and low starch intake.
- Meals centered on eggs, fish, meats, olive oil, avocado, olives, non-starchy vegetables, and other healthy fats.
- Smaller portions of berries; many higher-sugar fruits are minimized or avoided.
- Bread, rice, pasta, potatoes, sweets, juice, and most processed carbohydrates are usually removed.
- Some people use MCT oil or similar fat strategies, but these should be introduced carefully.

Sample day (ketogenic style)

Meal	Example
Breakfast	Eggs cooked in olive oil with spinach; avocado on the side.
Lunch	Large salad with olive oil, salmon or chicken, olives, and non-starchy vegetables.
Dinner	Grass-fed beef, chicken thighs, or fatty fish with broccoli or cauliflower and olive oil.
Snack (if needed)	A small handful of nuts, olives, or a modest serving of berries with unsweetened full-fat yogurt if tolerated.



4. Quick Shopping List

<p>Healthy fats Extra-virgin olive oil Avocados Olives Unsweetened full-fat yogurt or kefir if tolerated</p>	<p>Vegetables Spinach, kale, romaine Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts Zucchini, mushrooms, cucumbers Peppers, asparagus, cabbage</p>
<p>Proteins Eggs Wild salmon, sardines, tuna Grass-fed beef Pasture-raised chicken or turkey</p>	<p>Extras Blueberries or mixed berries Walnuts, chia, flax, pumpkin seeds Turmeric, cinnamon, rosemary Green tea</p>

5. Practical Cautions

- A stricter ketogenic diet should be approached carefully in frail older adults, people with low body weight, poor appetite, kidney or liver disease, pancreatic disease, or a history of eating disorders.
- Anyone taking insulin or blood sugar-lowering medications needs medical guidance before major carbohydrate restriction.
- Hydration, adequate protein, and adequate calories matter — especially in older adults at risk of weight loss.
- Even when diet is helpful, it works best alongside exercise, sleep optimization, treatment of depression or anxiety, blood sugar control, blood pressure management, and cognitive stimulation.

Bottom line: For prevention, start with a keto-light, lower-carb Mediterranean pattern focused on olive oil, avocados, vegetables, eggs, fish, and high-quality proteins. If dementia becomes more advanced, a fuller ketogenic approach may be considered with individualized clinical guidance.

Disclaimer

This handout is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Dietary changes, especially stricter ketogenic diets, should be individualized. Always discuss major diet changes with your physician or another qualified health professional, particularly if the patient is medically frail or takes medications for diabetes, blood pressure, or other chronic conditions. This handout does not establish a physician–patient relationship with COGNITIVA Brain Health PLLC or Mindful Behavioral Health. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.