

# Brain-Healthy, Heart-Healthy Diet: Good For You & The Environment

By Michael LeBrun

A growing collection of research shows that certain diets can not only benefit your personal health, but help the environment as well. The Mediterranean diet is one that has been dubbed “eco-friendly” as it reduces the environmental impact of food production, transportation, storage and consumption.

In 2013, Environmental Health published a study looking at the environmental impact of Mediterranean versus western dietary patterns and found that adherence to a Mediterranean diet reduced greenhouse gas emissions by over 70 percent, land use and energy consumption by over 50 percent and water consumption by over 30 percent. Conversely, adherence to a western dietary pattern led to an increase in each descriptor. A major reason for these results is the wide array of plant-based foods that serve as the foundation for the diet – vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains and spices. Individuals following the Mediterranean diet also tend to buy less processed “junk food” and eat less often from fast-food restaurants, and they usually spend more time shopping at farmers’ markets, joining neighborhood farm shares and growing their own food.

This Mediterranean diet can be further adapted to a senior population, with modifications like using low-fat dairy options to promote heart health, and whole grain breads made from white whole wheat to best resemble what seniors are accustomed to eating. Working with local food suppliers can be a crucial component to instituting what one might call a “Brain Healthy Program” that incorporates fresh vegetables and fruits, whole grains, spices, nuts, olive oil, eggs, lean meats, fish and seafood.

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