

## **Olive Oil may Reduce Risk of Dementia-related Death by 28 percent. Swapping Margarine for Olive Oil is also Beneficial.**

Olive oil is consumed at the rate of 90 million gallons annually in the United States, according to American Olive Oil. For years, the Mediterranean diet has been touted for its brain-boosting powers, helping preserve cognitive abilities and reduce dementia risk. But new research suggests a specific star player may be behind those mental benefits: olive oil.

### **The Most Recent Evidence**

In a recent study investigating the relationship between diet and dementia-related death, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, researchers analyzed the diets and health outcomes of more than 92,000 U.S. adults.

The participants reported their food habits, including olive oil intake, every four years for 28 years. Researchers then categorized participants based on their daily olive oil consumption: never or less than once per month, up to 4.5 grams, between 4.6 and 7 grams, or more than 7 grams. Over the study period, 4,751 dementia-related deaths were recorded.

The findings suggest that regardless of genetic predisposition and overall diet quality, those who included at least seven grams (half a teaspoon) of olive oil per day lowered their risk of dementia-related death by 28 percent compared to participants who reported never or rarely including olive oil in their diet.

Also, replacing even one teaspoon, or 5 grams, of margarine and mayonnaise with the same amount of olive oil per day was linked to an 8 to 14 percent reduced risk of death from dementia.

“Our study reinforces dietary guidelines recommending vegetable oils such as olive oil and suggests that these recommendations not only support heart health but potentially brain health, as well,” Anne-Julie Tessier, a postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and study co-author, said in a press release. “Opting for olive oil, a natural product, instead of fats such as margarine and commercial mayonnaise is a safe choice and may reduce the risk of fatal dementia,” she added.

However, this is an observational study, so it doesn’t prove olive oil caused the reduced fatal dementia risk. More research, such as randomized controlled trials, is needed to confirm not only the effects but also the optimal quantity of olive oil needed to see these benefits, Ms. Tessier noted.

### **Olive Oil’s Properties Linked to Better Brain Health**

The results of this research support other findings that point to the health benefits of using olive oil in place of unhealthy fats, Amy Pendleton Kay, a registered dietitian at Top Nutrition Coaching, told *The Epoch Times*. Extra virgin olive oil contains a combination of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, with up to 80 percent being the anti-inflammatory and antioxidant monounsaturated oleic acid. This is important as prolonged inflammation is associated with heart disease and cognitive decline, according to Ms. Kay. “It is thought that inflammation may lead to plaque buildup in the brain, which is associated with dementia,” she said.

Saturated fat has been linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and may negatively impact brain health and cognition by causing inflammation, increasing oxidative stress, and disrupting the blood-brain barrier, according to research, which also shows that monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats “have been associated with better health,” according to Ms. Kay.

## **Combat Heart Disease, Inflammation with Olive Oil, Vitamin D, Other Polyphenols — Feat. Dr. Gerald Lemole**

Although oils are essentially fats, not all fats are equal, she added. “Some oils and fats are healthier than others and have different impacts on our health,” she noted. Saturated fats should be limited, and even plant-based oils like coconut and palm oil are relatively higher in saturated fat compared to most other plant-based oils, Ms. Kay said.

However, there is a growing debate on whether saturated fat actually increases our risk for cardiovascular disease and associated conditions. Some experts argue that research into this association is outdated, and more recent findings suggest that the effect of saturated fat on raising LDL cholesterol is much less than previously believed.

### **Alternative Oils Supporting Brain Health**

While olive oil has been extensively researched, studies continue to explore how different fats and oils affect brain health.

Avocado oil, with a similar fat profile to extra virgin olive oil, might offer comparable benefits. A 2014 study found avocado oil improved cardiovascular risk markers in rats fed a high-sugar diet. Poor cardiovascular health has been linked to cognitive issues.

Palm oil has also shown significant health benefits, with one study highlighting its strong antioxidant effects. Antioxidants can protect brain cells from oxidative stress and prevent cell damage. Oxidative stress can impair neurogenesis, the generation of new neurons in the brain, damaging cognitive function. Like olive oil, palm oil is rich in the antioxidant oleic acid.

Coconut oil has demonstrated neuroprotective benefits, including relieving oxidative stress, reducing neuroinflammation, and improving mitochondrial function, according to research.

“Olive oil should be included as part of a healthy overall diet, such as the Mediterranean Diet,” Ms. Kay, said adding that more research is needed to “draw definitive conclusions” about olive oil’s role in preventing and treating diseases.