

# Dementia Nutrition Cheatsheet

*What to Feed the Brain at Every Stage*

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## **Feeding Them Well Feels Impossible Because You Are:**

- 1 Worried they are only eating sweets or junk
- 2 Unsure what is actually healthy for a dementia brain
- 3 Overwhelmed by conflicting diet advice online
- 4 Stretched too thin to cook special meals

## **By the End of This Cheatsheet You'll:**

- 1 Know the foods that genuinely help a dementia brain
- 2 Know simple ways to get nutrition in, even when they won't cooperate

## **1. The Best Foods for a Dementia Brain (the MIND Diet)**

The MIND diet was studied for slowing cognitive decline. Aim for leafy greens every day and a rainbow of color through the week.

- Berries (especially blueberries and strawberries)
- Leafy greens, at least one serving a day
- Whole grains
- Beans and lentils
- Fatty fish like salmon, tuna, and mackerel
- Olive oil as your main cooking and dressing oil
- Colorful vegetables
- Nuts

*One serving of leafy greens a day has been linked to a brain that functions as if it were 11 years younger.*

## **2. Why They Only Want Sweets (and What to Do)**

The dementia brain struggles to use glucose for fuel, and sweet is the last taste to fade. Cravings are biological, not stubbornness.

### ***Healthier ways to satisfy a sweet tooth:***

- Stewed, grilled, or sauteed fruit to deepen natural sweetness
- Berries with a little whipped cream
- Yogurt with fruit
- Lower-sugar protein bars that taste like a treat

## **3. Protein First**

Muscle loss speeds up with age, so protein matters more than ever. Prioritize it at every meal.

- Fish and shellfish like shrimp

- Tofu and edamame
- Beans and whole grains
- Leaner poultry and white meats
- Eggs, Greek yogurt, and cheese

#### **4. Sneaking Nutrition In**

- Hide vegetables in smoothies, soups, and sauces (a tomato sauce can hold five different vegetables)
- Use the baby-food shortcut to add pureed fruits and vegetables to meals
- Stir in avocado for easy calories, fiber, and potassium
- Add potatoes, which are filling, familiar, and easy to mash or rice

#### **5. When They Don't Eat Enough**

- Boost calories with olive oil in oatmeal, smoothies, or yogurt
- Stir in powdered milk or protein powder for extra protein
- Offer smaller, more frequent bites instead of a big plate
- Try finger foods, soups in a mug, and smoothies

##### ***Smoothie template:***

Fruit (no more than you would sit and eat) + a handful of leafy greens + a protein (Greek yogurt or protein powder) + a fat (chia, flax, nut butter, or olive oil).

#### **6. When They Overeat or Have Diabetes**

- Balance every carbohydrate with protein and fat to slow the sugar rush
- Prepare controlled snack trays so you decide what is within reach
- A short walk or a few stairs is the fastest way to bring glucose down
- Constant hunger and thirst can signal medication needs a doctor's review

*For diabetes, ask their doctor about a few visits with a dietitian or certified diabetes educator for a personalized plan.*

#### **7. Staying Hydrated**

- Use a shot glass or small juice glass, sips are easier than a full glass
- Remember fruit, tea, and juicy vegetables count toward hydration
- Make homemade fruit popsicles by blending and freezing fruit
- Go easy on store-bought electrolyte drinks, one serving a day at most

#### **8. Late-Stage and Pureed Foods**

- Add color with beets, carrots, and bright greens so it looks appetizing
- Season well so pureed food still tastes good
- Serve in pretty bowls rather than as a pile on a plate
- Look for pureed soup and smoothie-bowl recipes for variety

## **9. Supplements Worth It vs. Not**

### ***Helpful for many older adults:***

- A reputable, third-party-tested multivitamin
- Vitamin D
- Omega-3 fatty acids
- B vitamins (B6, folate, B12)
- Magnesium, which can also support sleep

### ***Skip these:***

- So-called "cognition" or "memory" supplements, which have no good evidence behind them

*Liquid and chewable forms are easier if pills are a struggle. Always check with their doctor before starting any supplement.*

*This cheatsheet is for general education and is not medical advice. Talk with your person's doctor or a registered dietitian about their specific needs.*