



Dementia

Flavonoid-rich foods and drinks may cut risk of dementia, study finds

Researchers say six additional servings of foods such as berries, tea and red wine daily could lower the risk by 28%

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Consuming more food and drinks rich in flavonoids, such as berries, tea and red wine, could lower the risk of dementia by 28%, a study suggests.

The number of people living with the disease globally is forecast to nearly triple to 153 million by 2050, which presents a rapidly increasing threat to global health and social care systems.

Age and genetics remain the biggest risk factors, but experts say almost half of cases could be prevented or delayed, and there is mounting evidence that diet could play a role in the risk of developing the disease.

Research led by Queen's University Belfast suggests that increasing the intake of flavonoid-rich foods and drinks could help reduce the risk of dementia by more than a quarter.

Academics said that flavonoids, primarily found in plant-based foods, have a range of health benefits, including antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties. They have also been linked to a reduced risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, as well as improved cognitive function.

The findings were published in the journal JAMA Network Open. The study's lead researcher, Prof Aedin Cassidy, said: "The worldwide prevalence of dementia continues to increase rapidly. In this population-based cohort study, we analysed dietary data from over 120,000 adults aged between 40 and 70 years from the UK Biobank.

"Our findings show that consuming six additional servings of flavonoid-rich foods per day, in particular berries, tea and red wine, was associated with a 28% lower risk of dementia. The findings were most noticeable in individuals with a high genetic risk, as well as in those with symptoms of depression."

The first author of the study, Dr Amy Jennings, also from Queen's, said the results suggested that taking a simple step such as increasing daily consumption of flavonoid-rich foods may lower dementia risk, especially in people at high risk.

"Currently, there is no effective treatment for the disease, so preventive interventions to improve health and quality of life - and reduce social and economic costs - should continue to be a major public health priority," she said.

Last month, [a milestone report from the Lancet commission on dementia](#) concluded that addressing 14 modifiable risk factors, starting in childhood and continuing throughout life, could prevent or delay 45% of dementia cases.

The report added two new risk factors that are associated with 9% of dementia

cases. About 7% of cases are linked to high low-density lipoprotein, or “bad” cholesterol, in midlife from about the age of 40, while 2% are attributable to untreated vision loss in later life.

The new risk factors were in addition to 12 identified by the Lancet commission in 2020, which together are attributable to about 36% of dementia cases.

They are: lower levels of education, hearing impairment, high blood pressure, smoking, obesity, depression, physical inactivity, diabetes, excessive alcohol consumption, traumatic brain injury, air pollution and social isolation.
