

Mediterranean diet boosts mind and body

By Allison Aubrey, NPR

For all of us nearing middle age, or slogging through it, yes, there is a benefit in eating a Mediterranean-style diet rich in fish, nuts, vegetables and fruit.

A new study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* finds that women who followed this pattern of eating in their 50s were about 40 percent more likely to reach the later decades without developing chronic diseases and memory or physical problems, compared to women who didn't eat as well.

Researchers tracked the dietary habits and lifestyles of more than 10,000 women, beginning in late middle age. Every two years, the women filled out detailed surveys describing their diets.

Over the next 15 years, researchers kept tabs on who among the women developed a whole host of chronic diseases including Parkinson's, cancer, lung and pulmonary disease. The women were also given a battery of memory tests, and researchers also evaluated physical function, meaning the women's abilities to move around and stay active.

"This really suggests that a healthy diet can help improve multiple aspects of your health and your ability to function when you're older," says Fran Grodstein researcher of Harvard School of Public Health.

Meir Stampfer, co-author of the new paper, says he was "surprised by the magnitude of the effects" in the study, given what we already know about the heart benefits of a Mediterranean style diet.

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