

# Healthy Body, Healthy Brain

**K-STATE**  
Research and Extension  
Family and Consumer Sciences

## LEADER'S GUIDE

2023 Annual Lesson Series

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## Introduction

Healthy minds live in healthy bodies, which means taking care of your heart and cardiovascular system is the best way to protect your brain. This is primarily accomplished through eating a healthy diet and regular physical activity. The MIND Diet is a proven way of eating that has protective brain benefits, including 10 brain-healthy foods but also 5 categories of foods that should be eaten with caution.

In addition to the benefits of good nutrition and activity, there are other lifestyle choices that benefit your wellbeing including improving digestive health and gut bacteria, promoting quality sleep, and reducing stress.

This lesson is designed to help participants improve their overall brain and body health and lower risks by adopting beneficial lifestyle behaviors.

## Educational Goals

As a result of participating in this educational program, the learner will be able to:

- Describe risk factors that can contribute to reduced brain and body function.
- Identify steps to take to support a healthy digestive system and improve gut bacteria.
- Recognize the health benefits related to the MIND Diet and regular physical activity.



- Understand health improvements possible from small changes in lifestyle behaviors such as getting more sleep and managing stress.

## Intended Audiences

Adult groups of any age; adults with specific interest in chronic disease prevention and control; adolescents or teens interested in health and nutrition topics; Family Community Education groups.

### **Before the lesson, prepare by taking these steps:**

- Read the Healthy Body, Healthy Brain Fact Sheet (MF3602) and Leader's Guide (MF3603). Familiar yourself with the content and terms contained in both.
- Study the linked resources discussing and supporting the themes of the lesson.
- Consider how the program will be delivered to the particular audiences. What themes will you emphasize? There many sub-topics within this lesson, for example emphasis on quality sleep, ways to reduce stress, physical activity, maintaining a healthy gut, and the MIND Diet.

Are there related topics that you would like to expand on for your group?

## Leading the lesson

The Healthy Brain, Healthy Body fact sheet is designed and written to serve as a script or outline for this lesson. The introduction provides a brief overview of the contents and sub-categories of the lesson. Engaging in one or more of the suggested activities will reinforce the relevance of the lesson themes (healthier eating habits, regular physical activity, quality sleep and stress reduction).

### Possible activities to support this lesson

1. **MIND Diet Check** — To illustrate the importance of following the MIND diet, use the score sheet on page 4 to evaluate how you are doing now and steps you can take to move to a higher number.

Using the chart, located at the following link, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4581900/table/T1/?report=objectonly](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4581900/table/T1/?report=objectonly), determine how your dietary intake compares to the MIND Diet (referring to the list of total and limits on page 4.) A score of 0, .5, or 1 per food item is assigned based on how close you get to the number of servings per week. Keep in mind:

- The goal is to achieve 15 total points.
  - Each day may look a little different so be patient with yourself and the process.
  - Allow the scores to help you determine areas that you can celebrate and others that need some attention.
  - Set SMART Goals that best fit your health needs: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely.
2. **Brain stimulating activities** — As a group discuss what activities you are currently engaging in to stimulate your brain. Discuss new ideas for engagement and challenge one another

to try something different. Be prepared to offer suggestions or try one listed below:

- Learn to play a musical instrument; learn a new board or card game; have meaningful social interaction with people; volunteer; join an organization; start a new hobby or revisit an old one; take different routes when you travel; write or draw with your less dominant hand; try to do something new and different every day.
  - Brain teasers ideas are listed in the publication from NDSU Extension, *Exercise Your Brain*, which can be found at, [www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/sites/default/files/2021-12/fn1431.pdf](http://www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/sites/default/files/2021-12/fn1431.pdf)
  - The fact sheet, *Keys to Embracing Aging, Brain Activity*, offers suggestions on mental stimulation. The fact sheet can be found at, [ksre-learn.com/MF3259](http://ksre-learn.com/MF3259)
3. **Other themes** — If you have time, discuss some of the other themes in the fact sheet (exercise and physical activity, manage your stress). Some questions your group could discuss:
    - Think about a time when you may have experienced chronic or prolonged stress. What type of stress management strategies worked for you? What didn't work? Since stress is unavoidable, were you able to "reframe" or think differently about your situation?
    - Let's talk about sleep. More than a third of American adults are not getting enough sleep on a regular basis, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Do you struggle to get adequate, quality sleep? Are there any strategies for better sleep in the fact sheet that you are willing to try?
    - Are you able to meet the minimum guidelines for physical activity, at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week? What type of activities do you enjoy? (The best exercise is the one you will actually do.) Do you do strengthening exercises at least 2 days each

week? What are some barriers that prevent you from getting the amount of activity you need? As a group, can you think of possible solutions to these barriers?

## Glossary of Terms

**Subjective Cognitive Decline (SCD)** – Self-reported memory problems that have been getting worse over the last year. In Kansas, 1 in 9 people aged 45 and older are experiencing SCD.

**Dementia** – This is a general term for the impaired ability to remember, think, or make decisions that interferes with everyday activities. While it affects older adults predominantly, it is not a part of normal aging.

**Alzheimer's Disease** – This is the most common type of dementia and it is a progressive disease. It involves parts of the brain that control thought, memory, and language. Alzheimer's begins with mild memory loss and as it progresses, it can seriously affect a person's ability to carry out daily activities.

**Mental Health** – This encompasses our emotional, psychological, and social well-being, and affects how we think, feel, and act. Our mental health also guides how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. It is important to know that poor mental health and mental illness are not the same. One can experience poor mental health and not be diagnosed with a mental illness.

**Mental Illness** – These are health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking and/or behavior. Those with mental illness experience

distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities. Mental illness is common and most often it is treatable.

**MIND Diet** – The MIND diet is a brain-healthy diet that stands for Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay. It's a hybrid of the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) and the Mediterranean diet, and it focuses on food groups in each diet that can boost your brain-power and protect it from age-related problems like Alzheimer's disease. (WebMD)

**Processed Foods** – **1)** Minimally processed foods have been pre-prepped for convenience such as bagged spinach, cut vegetables, and roasted nuts. Minimally processed foods have a place in a healthy diet. **2)** Heavily processed foods include ready-to-eat foods such as crackers, deli meat, chips, and frozen dinners. Heavily processed foods should be avoided when possible.

**Enteric Nervous System**, or ENS, is the brain in the human gut. It consists of two thin layers of more than 100 million nerve cells lining the gastrointestinal tract from the esophagus to the rectum.

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## MIND Diet summary for target weekly totals and limits, score sheet

A score of 0, .5, or 1 per food item is assigned based on how close you get to the number of servings per week. *The goal is to achieve 15 total points.*

Score Key: 0 =  $\leq 2$  servings/wk      .5 = 2 to  $<6$ /wk      1 =  $\geq 6$  servings/wk

Healthy Brain Food	Serving Per Week	0 POINTS	.5 (1/2) POINT	1 POINT
Leafy greens	7			
Other vegetables	7			
Nuts	5			
Berries	2			
Beans	3			
Whole grains	21 (3/day)			
Fish	1			
Poultry	2			
Olive oil	14 (2/day)			
Wine	7 (1/day)			
<b>Foods to limit</b>				
Red meat	< 3			
Butter	< 7			
Cheese	< 1			
Sweets	< 5			
Fried/Fast food	< 1			
<b>TOTAL</b>				