



WHY DO WE PROMOTE EATING FISH IN AGED CARE?

Fish, particularly oily fish has been shown to have numerous health benefits in regards to improving cardiovascular function, reducing inflammation and promoting both brain and eye health. Consuming fish on a regular basis can help to improve overall health for individuals of all ages, however this is also particularly true for older individuals. In this population group, oily fish has also been shown to potentially reduce the risk of developing both dementia and alzheimer's disease, as well as improving inflammatory conditions that can come with age.

BRAIN HEALTH AND DEMENTIA

Dementia is a degenerative condition which results in the loss of cognitive function affecting memory and judgement. This can then cause confusion in standard daily activities such as using cutlery and eating food.

There remains some debate as to whether omega-3 reduces the progression of dementia if already diagnosed, however some studies have suggested that a diet rich in omega-3 (predominantly found in oily fish) can help to reduce the risk of developing dementia, as well as delaying the loss of brain cells during ageing.

Therefore, consuming fish as part of a regular diet at least two times per week in the elderly population can be concluded to help with retaining neural connections and healthy brain functioning, and lower the risk of developing dementia as we age.

INFLAMMATORY CONDITIONS

Inflammation is a key component to many chronic diseases such as arthritis, cancer and heart disease. Reducing overall inflammation levels can help to promote health and prevent many chronic diseases as we age.

Oily fish has been shown to be far more beneficial in reducing inflammation compared to non-oily fish. This include salmon, sardines, mackerel and trout. The good fats found in fish help in reducing symptoms of chronic inflammation such as swelling in the joints, infections and fatigue.

Whilst this is beneficial for people of all ages, this is particularly important in older individuals as inflammation can increase during ageing.

EYE HEALTH

Vision is extremely important in the elderly population as the risk of developing cataracts and macular degeneration increases as we age. Older individuals also tend to have reduced mobility which when coupled with vision issues can be quite dangerous.

CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

Adults 65 years and older are at a greater risk of developing cardiovascular disease. The process of ageing can cause changes in both the heart and blood vessels which can increase a person's risk of developing heart disease later in life.

SUMMARY

The benefits of including fish as part of a regular diet can be beneficial for people of all age groups, however extra benefit can be seen in the older population. Oily fish in particular can promote vision and eye health, reduce cholesterol buildup and heart disease, lower inflammatory levels, and aid in maintaining cognitive function as we age.

The recommendation remains for fish to be included in the diet at least twice per week in order to get the most benefit, as well as choosing oilier fish where possible such as sardines, salmon, and mackerel.

