

# 'Plant-based plus fish' keeps your brain healthy

PhD candidate Annick van Soest studied which combinations of food and nutrients help the brain age more slowly. She will be defending her PhD at the end of June.

Van Soest looked at brain health in the context of the EAT-Lancet diet, which is both healthy for humans and sustainable for the planet. 'Our research shows that the closer people keep to that diet, the more slowly their cognitive health deteriorates. We saw an effect within just two years.'

That is not surprising, explains Van Soest. 'That diet contains all the nutrients we know to be important for healthy cognitive ageing: some fatty acids from fish for the omega-3, lots of fruit and vegetables for the antioxidants and polyphenols and some animal products for vitamin B12. That diet also has a lot of wholemeal products, nuts, vegetable oil and pulses for vitamins B and E.'

## Plant-based plus fish

Van Soest used the same data set to analyse the effect of the EAT-Lancet diet and the association between a plant-based diet and cognitive ageing. 'We didn't find a positive effect on healthy cognitive ageing for a completely vegetarian diet. That is probably because you are then not getting the omega-3 fatty acids from fish. People who eat a plant-based diet

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with a bit of fish do experience healthy cognitive ageing.'

A lot of research has been done in the past on the MIND diet, a variant on the Mediterranean diet that was designed to boost healthy cognitive

ageing. Van Soest: 'That diet is good for brain health but it contains more animal-based products than the EAT-Lancet diet, which makes it less sustainable. Now we know the EAT-Lancet diet is good for healthy cognitive ageing, we can choose a diet that is both sustainable and healthy.' DV