

Nutrition and longevity

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Citation: Giovanni Gambassi. Nutrition and longevity. Middle East Journal of Age and Ageing, Volume 15, Issue 2, June 2018.
DOI: 10.5742/MEJAA.2018.93430

ABSTRACT

Healthy longevity is a tangible possibility for many individuals and populations, with nutritional and other lifestyle factors playing a key role in modulating the likelihood of healthy ageing. Nevertheless, studies of effects of nutrients or single foods on ageing often show inconsistent results and ignore the overall framework of dietary habits. Therefore, the use of dietary patterns (e.g. a Mediterranean dietary pattern) and the specific dietary recommendations (e.g. dietary approaches to stop hypertension, Polymeal and the American Healthy Eating Index) are becoming more widespread in promoting life-long health. A posteriori defined dietary patterns are described frequently in relation to age-related diseases but their generalisability is often a challenge since these are developed specifically for the population under study. Conversely, the dietary guidelines

are often developed based on prevention of disease or nutrient deficiency, but often less attention is paid to how well these dietary guidelines promote health outcomes. In the present paper, we provide an overview of the state of the art of dietary patterns and dietary recommendations in relation to life expectancy and the risk of age-related disorders (with emphasis on cardiometabolic diseases and cognitive outcomes). According to both a posteriori and a priori dietary patterns, some key 'ingredients' can be identified that are associated consistently with longevity and better cardiometabolic and cognitive health. These include high intake of fruit, vegetables, fish, (whole) grains and legumes/pulses and potatoes, whereas dietary patterns rich in red meat and sugar-rich foods have been associated with an increased risk of mortality and cardiometabolic outcomes.