

CHEESE AND MILK FOR BRAINS

DAIRY products such as cheese and milk are among the most reviled of foods, with many experts saying their links to heart disease and obesity mean we should shun them when possible.

But new research has caused controversy by suggesting that, in fact, dairy food could be essential for a healthy brain.

The study, by American and Australian researchers involving 1,000 adults, found those who regularly consumed dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt score better on tests of mental ability than people who never, or rarely, consume dairy.

Although the research, published in the *International Dairy Journal*, needs following-up, as it did not conclusively establish the link between dairy and fatty diets and brain power, it highlights an intriguing line of research.

It follows another US study, involving 104 pensioners, where scientists found older people with higher levels of beneficial fats in their blood had less brain shrinkage typical of Alzheimer's disease. These beneficial fats — omega-3 essential fats — are found in foods such as oily fish.

The research, published in *Neurology*, the journal of the American Academy of Neurology, is key, as it measured the levels

of different fats in people's blood, rather than simply relying on their reports of what they tended to eat regularly.

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