



Top Five Foods to Support Brain Health

By Kylie James, BSc, OT CNP Certified Nutrition Practitioner

Our brain needs specific foods and nutrients to help it function properly. Eating the right kind of foods can support mood, mental focus and memory. Here are the top five foods to support your brain health.

Eat Your Nuts and Seeds

Did you know that 60% of our brain is made up of fat? This includes saturated as well as polyunsaturated fats. Omega 3 is a very important fat for our brain and we just do not get enough in our diets due to poor food choices, cooking and heating methods, and consuming processed foods. Omega 3 surround our nerves and protect them. They ensure our nerves can transmit a smooth signal. Believe it or not, these good fats help regulate the release and performance of neurotransmitters. If we don't consume enough of these good fats in our diet we can experience depression, memory and learning problems, difficulty concentrating, inflammation and even schizophrenia (Holford 2004).

The best way to get good fats, especially Omega 3, is by eating raw nuts and seeds. You need them to be raw as this preserves the fat content and nutrients. Consuming **flax seeds, hemp seeds, pumpkin seeds, chia seeds and walnuts** is a great way to get these good fats into your body. Walnuts are rated number one for brain health, so make this nut a must! You can make up some trail mix bags and keep them in the fridge for a quick grab and go snack or put them on your yogurt, oatmeal or sprinkle on top of salads.

Eat your Blueberries

Anti oxidants are important for protecting our bodies and brain from harmful free radicals. These can be found in our fruits and vegetables, with the highest amounts being in berries. Blueberries contain anthocyanins which can cross the **blood-brain barrier**, and may help decrease vulnerability to the oxidative stress that occurs with aging, reduce inflammation, and increase signaling between neurons.

A six-year nurses' health study in more than 16,000 older individuals found that consuming two or more half-cup servings of blueberries and strawberries a week were linked to slower mental decline and delays in mental aging by up to 2.5 years. Another study identified nine older adults with mild cognitive impairment who consumed blueberry juice every day. After 12 weeks, they experienced improvements in several markers of brain function (Kroikorian 2010).

Tufts University scientists have found that the addition of blueberries to the diet in animal studies improved short-term memory, navigational skills, balance and coordination. Compounds in blueberries seem to jump-start the brain in ways that get aging neurons to communicate again.

Eat your Eggs

Eggs are packed with brain supporting nutrients such as vitamins B6, B12, choline and folate. Deficiencies in B12 and folate have been linked to depression. The yolk is higher in fat

and contains a nutrient called choline, which is good for the brain.

The National Academic Press indicates that choline is an important micronutrient that your body uses to create acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter that helps regulate mood and memory. Two studies found that higher intakes of choline were linked to better memory and mental function (Nurk, Resfum, et al 2013) (Poly, et al 2011). Because eggs are high in the B vitamins, they are good at helping to reduce mental decline as we age.

Eggs are economical, and quick and easy to make for any meal of the day. The Mayo clinic indicates that although chicken eggs are high in cholesterol, the effect of egg consumption on blood cholesterol is minimal when compared with the effect of trans fats. Most healthy people can eat up to seven eggs a week with no increase in their risk of heart disease. Some studies have shown that this level of egg consumption may actually prevent some types of strokes.

Drink Green Tea

Green tea is high in antioxidants and polyphenols which can help to protect the brain from free radical damage. It has shown to improve memory, mental focus and mental alertness (Dietz, Dekker, 2017).

L-theanine is an amino acid found in green tea. This amino acid can cross the blood-brain barrier and increase the activity of the neurotransmitter GABA, which helps reduce anxiety and makes us feel more relaxed. Although caffeine in green tea can help increase our mental alertness, the L-theanine helps us to avoid getting the “jitters” and nervous energy that coffee can sometimes give us.

So switch out your coffee for green tea and if you are not a hot green tea fan - brew a pot and put it in the fridge to cool and add Stevia® for a healthy iced tea beverage.

BRAIN IMAGING STUDY

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- Age 18 to 60
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Eat Dark Chocolate

Get rid of your candy bars, cookies and candies and reach for a couple of squares of dark chocolate instead. Sugar is terrible for brain function and switching out these high sugar treats for some 85% dark chocolate may be just the trick. Chocolate is high in magnesium which helps to calm the mind and promote relaxation. In fact, craving chocolate can be a sign of a magnesium deficiency.

Dark chocolate and cocoa powder are packed with a few brain-boosting

compounds, including flavonoids, caffeine and antioxidants. The flavonoids in chocolate gather in the areas of the brain that deal with learning and memory. Researchers say these compounds may enhance memory and also help slow down age-related mental decline (Sokolov, Pavlova et al, 2013).

Chocolate also contains a chemical, phenylethylamine (PEA), which can help to elevate mood and feelings of love, suppress appetite and improve memory and learning. Feel the love and eat some dark chocolate! ♦♦♦