

Boost your brainpower with brain food



Food is an essential source of fuel to our bodies. Healthy eating is essential for brain function, as the brain uses more than 20% of our caloric needs. Unfortunately, many foods common to the American diet contain processed grains, high levels of refined sugars, salt, preservatives, and chemical additives—all of which are harmful to our brain and body.

Generally, brain-boosting foods will contain one or more of the following: antioxidants, B vitamins, healthful fats, and omega fatty acids. These nutrients are also linked to lowering the risk of neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.

Oily fish are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids which help build membranes around each cell in the body. This improves the structure of brain cells called neurons and leads to increased blood flow in the brain. Oily fish with high levels of omega-3s include: salmon, mackerel, tuna, herring, and sardines.

Berries contain flavonoid antioxidants which reduce inflammation and oxidative stress. These compounds can improve communication between brain cells, increasing plasticity. This helps cells form new connections, thus boosting learning and memory, and delaying age-related neurodegenerative diseases.

Avocados are a strong source of healthful unsaturated fats which aid in reducing blood pressure. Unsaturated fats reduce triglycerides in the bloodstream that are responsible for the buildup of plaque in arteries. This lowers the risk of cognitive decline and strokes. Saturated fats, or bad fats, raise cholesterol levels which causes atherosclerosis and can lead to strokes. Other sources of healthful unsaturated fats include: almonds, cashews, sunflowers, and walnuts.

Eggs are an excellent source of vitamins B6 and B12, folate, and choline. Choline is an important micronutrient used to make a neurotransmitter, acetylcholine, that helps regulate mood and memory. Higher intakes of choline are linked to better memory and mental function. However, many people do not get enough choline in their diet. Egg yolks are one of the most concentrated sources of this nutrient.

Cacao, found in dark chocolate, is rich in theobromine. This is a powerful antioxidant known to support cellular aging and reduce the risk of heart disease. Theobromine is also a vasodilator and improves blood flow to the brain.

Overall, the brain is an energy intensive organ and must be properly fueled. Achieving a healthier brain can be as straightforward as eating the proper foods.



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