

Positive Thinking: Berries On The Brain

(NAPSA)—“Losing your mind” is the tongue-in-cheek term used to describe the loss in memory that we experience as we age. Although a decline in memory is a normal aging process, researchers are looking for ways to delay its onset or progression or, better yet, prevent it altogether. So far, the best strategies for preserving brain health appear to be the very same ones that may also protect against other chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer: a healthy diet and exercise.

New research shows that eating delicious foods such as strawberries may help prevent the decline in learning and motor skills commonly seen with aging. In a new study out of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, researchers sped up the aging process in laboratory animals and then added strawberries to their meals. These additions to their diet helped preserve the animals’ ability to learn, remember and relearn different patterns in a maze.

There are several reasons why strawberries may be effective. Previous research has shown that damage to the brain by harmful substances called free radicals plays an important role in the decline of brain function. Strawberries are rich in anti-oxidants that destroy these free radicals; a study ranking the anti-oxidant content per serving of over 1,000 foods and beverages ranked strawberries third overall, behind only blackberries and walnuts.

Strawberries are an excellent source of vitamin C and other anti-oxidants that may help protect the brain as it ages. Strawberries are



Strawberry preserve: Anti-oxidant-rich strawberries may help keep the brain healthy as we age.

also a good source of folate, an important B vitamin that, along with vitamin B12, helps maintain normal levels of a protein called homocysteine. An analysis of older U.S. women in a 2004 Nurses’ Health Study found that those women with the highest levels of folate and vitamin B12 were cognitively equivalent to being about five years younger.

It’s easy to incorporate strawberries into meals and snacks. Strawberries are a terrific way to get your morning off to a great start: Top a whole-grain English muffin with low-fat cream cheese and sliced strawberries or make a smoothie with fresh berries. Strawberries can be a sweet addition to any salad. You can dress up entrées of grilled chicken, beef or broiled seafood with salsas or sauces made with strawberries. And they can be added to desserts or simply eaten whole or sliced for an end-of-meal treat or snack.

So add some anti-oxidant-rich fruits such as strawberries into your diet as often as you can. Your brain will thank you for it.