

Total Nutrition

Brain Food: Think Healthy

(NAPSA)—It's a classic concern—age and memory problems. A growing number of studies however, suggest you might be able to forget your worries. Research suggests a link between nutrients and enhanced mental activity—a boost you may be able to bank and use later in life.

The Key Players

B vitamins—

Vitamins B6, B12 and folic acid may help the brain stay sharp by lowering the amino

acid homocysteine. Increased blood levels of homocysteine have been associated with the risk of heart disease. Similarly, high levels of homocysteine may affect the arteries to the brain as well, thereby reducing blood flow. According to some scientists, homocysteine may affect neurotransmitters in the brain.

Antioxidants—Vitamins C, E and betacarotene are thought to protect cells from the damage caused by free radicals. Studies that have looked at people's memory and thinking skills have found that those who consume the most antioxidant-rich foods (fruits, vegetables and whole grains) tend to experience less cognitive decline.

The Right Kind Of Fat—

Some studies suggest that mono-unsaturated fat (like that found in olive and canola oil) and omega-3 fatty acids (found in fish) have a protective effect on brain cells. The exact benefit is unclear, but the link seems significant enough to encourage people to choose fats wisely.

Iron and zinc—Too little of these minerals in the diet is associated with poor concentration and reduced memory. A diet that includes foods rich in iron and zinc may help keep the brain sharp.

Feeding Your Brain—The brain constantly needs fuel (a.k.a. energy). The best way to fuel the brain day in and day out is to eat often—at least every three to four

Brain Nutrients	Food sources
B6	Banana, fish, chicken, potatoes, turkey, mango, beef, cereal
B12	Meats, fish, egg, dairy products, some cereals
Folic Acid	Legumes, cereals, whole grains, dark green vegetables, orange juice, papaya
Vitamin C	Citrus foods, kiwi, strawberries, mango, tomatoes, peppers
E	Vegetable oils, nuts, sunflower seeds, peanut butter, some cereals
Beta-carotene	Orange and red fruits and vegetables; Dark green vegetables
Iron	Beef, cereals, raisins, legumes
Zinc	Beef, nuts, yogurt, legumes, shrimp

hours—starting first thing in the morning.

The primary source of energy for the brain is glucose. Glucose primarily comes from carbohydrates with some of the best sources being whole-grain foods such as whole-wheat breads, whole-grain cereals and pasta. Unlike sugary foods, which cause glucose levels to rise quickly and then fall nearly as fast, whole-grain foods take longer to digest and thus send a steady stream of fuel to the brain. Add a little protein to the mix, such as a glass of milk, a slice of cheese or lean meat, and energy can last three to four hours.

There are several nutrients that affect the brain. Carbohydrates offer it energy. Protein, vitamins, minerals and even certain fats help keep the cells healthy. A well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains can give your brain the nutrition it needs to last a lifetime.

A Great Start Toward Total

Nutrition—Hold off on herbs. Some, such as ginkgo biloba, are advertised for their brain-enhancing power, but the jury is still out on their effectiveness. A few studies show they may be beneficial for people who have already lost some mental function. No studies conclude that they help healthy brains.

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