



THE TOP 20 BRAIN FOODS



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It's obvious that our bodies change as we grow older, but that doesn't mean we can't do everything in our power to combat them! One thing we can do to optimize our health is eat some of the top 20 brain enhancing foods regularly to help keep our brain healthy.

We thoroughly enjoy feeling the benefits when we are in good health! We should strive to go to work each day having plenty of energy to be productive and happy. More importantly, we want to know that our mind will remain sharp throughout our life.

✓ **Amazingly, some foods you eat stimulate your brain and maximize your blood flow, while others deplete it.**

HEALTHY FOOD FACTS

Of all the things that affect the health of your brain, your diet is probably the most essential for keeping your brain functioning at peak performance. Not only is diet important for your entire body, but it's vital for allowing your brain to grow and function well from birth to old age. Your brain needs you to provide enough protein and other nutrients in order to develop properly.

Choline, one of the most important elements necessary to create the neurotransmitter acetylcholine in the brain, can be found in soybeans, egg yolks, peanuts, and liver, which also provides protein. **If your diet doesn't include enough choline, the nerve cells will use their own membranes to make the acetylcholine that the brain needs.**

Nutritionists will tell you that you need to eat foods that are fresh, not processed. Processed foods – those made with refined flour, sugars, and preservatives – may have some vitamins and minerals in them; however those nutrients pale in comparison to those found in fresh foods.

✓ **Fresh fruits and vegetables are as close to nature as possible and include the most nutrients and vitamins.**

Fresh foods provide **folate** to stimulate the brain, **Omega 3 fatty acids** to enhance the brain's function, and **tryptophan**, which turns into serotonin and relieves depression and insomnia. The foods you eat can also boost your mental clarity and brain growth and improve your alertness.

These are a few of the many important chemicals found in food that directly influence your brain's health. They also determine how you feel, whether you're energized, and how well you can think clearly.

✓ **The health of your brain depends on and is affected by the foods you eat. You have the power to provide your body and brain with the best foods to keep them both strong and healthy.**

BOOST YOUR BRAIN FIRST THING IN THE MORNING WITH A GREAT BREAKFAST

You have probably heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, but do you know why that is?

Well, what you eat in the morning goes a long way toward giving your brain a boost as the day begins. In fact, people who skip breakfast in the morning are doing themselves a disservice because they are depriving their brain of the much-needed nutrients that are so important for proper brain function.

✓ **A healthy breakfast has a positive effect on what we can remember and how well we perform. It can also boost our creativity!**

These are all important things to consider when choosing what to eat first thing in the morning. A good breakfast will provide your body with what it needs to fuel your brainpower and kick-start your metabolism.

Choose from the following five foods to get your day – and your brain – off to a great start:

1. Whole grain foods such as whole grain breads or cereals

Why is it good for you? Whole grain foods stimulate your brain by providing folate which helps bring oxygen-rich blood to the brain. They are also high in Vitamin B6 and thiamine.

How does it help you get more done? These foods help you remember and focus. Plus, whole grains won't leave you feeling tired since it doesn't spike your blood sugar levels like white breads or sugary cereals.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Have whole grain toast or cereal for breakfast. You can also make a loaf enriched with whole grains, ground flax seeds, or nuts.

2. Walnuts, almonds, pecans, and cashews

Why is it good for you? Walnuts provide omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids as well as vitamins E and B6. They help correct the brain's serotonin level. Almonds contain riboflavin which boosts memory. Pecans provide choline which helps with memory and brain development. Cashews are high in magnesium which allows more oxygen to the brain.

How does it help you get more done? Nuts help boost your memory and increase brain membrane function, which allows more oxygen-rich blood to reach your brain.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Add nuts to whole grain cereals or eat them alone. You can also create or buy nut butters (similar to peanut butter) to spread on whole grain toast.

3. Blueberries, strawberries, and blackberries

Why is it good for you? Blueberries contain ellagic acid, which prevents brain cell damage. Strawberries are rich in antioxidants, and blackberries contain anthocyanins which help fight degenerative brain diseases.

How does it help you get more done? Berries strengthen the brain by helping with memory and cognitive skills. Berries also improve brain cell communication.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Add berries to your cereal or whip up a berry-rich smoothie.

4. Seeds such as sunflower or pumpkin

Why is it good for you? Seeds and nuts boost your mood and affect your brain power. They contain thiamine which increases memory and cognitive function as well as zinc, Vitamins A and E, and omega 3 and 6 fatty acids.

How does it help you get more done? You will be able to think clearly and remember more.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Add seeds to your smoothie or make muffins with whole grains, nuts and seeds.

5. Eggs

Why is it good for you? Eggs contain choline which helps boost your memory.

How does it help you get more done? If you remember more you won't have to search for information because you'll have it readily accessible in your brain.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Eggs are one of the easiest foods to incorporate into your diet. Cooking them by poaching or boiling is healthier than frying them.

LUNCH – GETTING THROUGH THE DAY WITH ENERGY

It's true that breakfast is the most important meal of the day because it provides the nutrients and energy you need to get your day started right. When it comes to portions, **your lunch should be larger than your dinner!** By consuming most of your health-packed calories during the middle of the day, you're providing yourself with the energy you need to keep going strong until the end of the day.

These five foods will provide the energy you need:

6. Avocados

Why is it good for you? Your brain needs healthy fats to function properly.

Avocados are nearly as good as berries for brain health. The mono-unsaturated fats allow blood to flow properly which is imperative for a healthy brain.

How does it help you get more done? Without enough blood flowing to the brain, it would soon become starved of oxygen. Increased blood flow to your brain allows you think clearly and remain alert.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Add half of an avocado to a healthy tossed salad or eat the slices on the side. Sprinkle some lemon juice, salt, or honey for different flavors and textures.

7. Tomatoes

Why is it good for you? Tomatoes have an abundance of lycopene, which helps protect our brains against damage caused by free radicals. They are also full of vitamins A and C as well as potassium.

How does it help you get more done? Free radicals are thought to be a major factor in the development of dementia or Alzheimer's disease. By eating more tomatoes, whether raw or cooked, you may reduce your chances of developing these diseases.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? The health benefits of tomatoes remain whether they are eaten raw or cooked. Eat them sliced on sandwiches, in salads, or as a sauce for whole wheat pasta.

8. Broccoli

Why is it good for you? Broccoli is high in several nutrients including vitamin K.

How does it help you get more done? Vitamin K enhances your cognitive abilities and improves your brainpower.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Cut it up in a salad, steam it, or eat it raw with a hummus dip.

9. Red cabbage

Why is it good for you? Red cabbage provides you with the antioxidant polyphenol.

How does it help you get more done? Polyphenols reduce cell damage, which may be helpful in preventing Alzheimer's disease.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? To get the most benefit from cabbage, shred it and eat it raw in a salad or slaw.

10. Spinach

Why is it good for you? Folic acid is one of the main nutrients to be found in spinach.

How does it help you get more done? The folic acid in spinach aids your memory. It also helps slow down the effects of aging and can improve your ability to learn.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Eat it raw in a salad or use the leaves in place of iceberg lettuce in a sandwich.

SNACKS TO HELP YOU GET THINGS DONE

You may have heard that snacking between meals isn't good for you. However, the real truth is that snacks in the afternoon can help give you an energy boost, awaken your brain, and give you a much needed break.

Here are five snack foods to nourish your brain:

11. Green tea

Why is it good for you? Green tea has catechines in it which help you relax. It also has polyphenols, which stimulate the development of dopamine. These help the brain run smoothly by maintaining levels of glucose in your body.

How does it help you get more done? Tea enhances memory and focus and helps in fighting mental fatigue.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Drink a cup sweetened with honey or raw agave, instead of white sugar, for a healthier beverage.

12. Dark chocolate

Why is it good for you? Dark chocolate contains powerful antioxidants and stimulates your brain naturally.

How does it help you get more done? There are flavanoids in chocolate that aid in bringing blood to the brain and enhance your ability to think clearly.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Use chocolate sparingly as a snack and choose dark chocolate over milk chocolate. Remember, it is high in fat and calories so you may want to use it as a special treat.

13. Bananas

Why is it good for you? Bananas are full of vitamin B6, potassium, and folic acid.

How does it help you get more done? Bananas help raise your serotonin levels which improves your mood. Naturally, if you are in a better mood you'll be more productive.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Eat them raw, add them to fruit salads, or use them in your favorite smoothie.

14. Yogurt

Why is it good for you? Not only does yogurt have calcium, which is good for your bones, but it also has an amino acid called tyrosine which produces two neurotransmitters – dopamine and noradrenalin.

How does it help you get more done? Eating yogurt when you're running out of steam improves your memory and helps make you more alert.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Yogurt can be eaten straight out of the package or mixed with fruit for smoothies.

15. Cottage cheese

Why is it good for you? Any type of cheese will provide calcium. It also has a good supply of protein.

How does it help you get more done? Protein in cottage cheese increases serotonin which makes you feel more satisfied. This may enable you to get more work done because you feel nourished.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Enjoy a serving by itself, cooked in pasta dishes, or as an accompaniment with salad.

DINNER – DON'T STUFF YOURSELF

It's easy to overeat at dinner time. Unfortunately, if you do, your body has to work harder to digest the food. Instead of being able to relax and prepare for tomorrow, your body and brain are working hard at processing too many foods.

✓ **Eat sparingly at dinner, with an eye toward providing what your body needs overnight.**

Here are five good foods to eat with your evening meal:

16. Eggplant

Why is it good for you? Nasunin is found the skins of eggplants. This nutrient is an antioxidant that helps keep our brains sharp by allowing brain cells to communicate better.

How does it help you get more done? If you want improved focus, add eggplant to your diet. Eggplant also helps us retain our memory longer and can help us enhance our learning through greater attention and concentration.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Slice and grill them. They can be added to salads, sandwiches, or sauces.

17. Extra lean beef

Why is it good for you? Beef is a great source of protein, which is important to fuel the brain. It also provides vitamin A, B, C, E, magnesium, iron, and zinc.

How does it help you get more done? Iron is important to maintaining thought functions and helps improve our memories.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Grill a steak or hamburger. You can also use beef for shish kabobs or stir-fry. The key, though, is that the portion of meat should be about the size of a deck of cards.

18. Wild Salmon

Why is it good for you? You probably can't find a better source of omega 3 fatty acids than those found in deep-water fish.

How does it help you get more done? Omega 3 fatty acids are important for improving memory and learning. They also help fight off depression which could adversely affect our productivity.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Grill a salmon steak for dinner, use it on a salad, or use it raw in sushi. You can also take Omega 3 fish oils or supplements.

19. Romaine lettuce

Why is it good for you? Leafy greens like romaine lettuce contains vitamins A, C, and K, minerals, and can be eaten without fear of fats or calories.

How does it help you get more done? The vitamins and minerals help slow loss of thought or reasoning skills.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Use it in place of iceberg lettuce in salads or eat it in your favorite healthy sandwich.

20. Dry beans

Why is it good for you? They are full of vitamin B5, folic acid, and magnesium.

How does it help you get more done? B vitamins are essential for normal brain function. If your brain isn't functioning smoothly, you won't get any work done.

How can you incorporate it into your diet? Make soup, chili, or have them as a side dish.

HEALTHY EATING TIPS

These top 20 brain enhancing foods are easy to find in your local grocery store and easy to incorporate into your family's diet. Each of these foods are packed with vitamins and minerals that affect your brain in different ways.

Some energize the body, others stimulate the brain, and still others enhance your thinking ability. After eating these foods, you may also find that you are more creative than you've ever been.

✓ **Each food, in its own way, helps you get more work done and can help you enjoy your life more.**

Even though these foods are healthy and promote a healthy brain, you must still **eat all foods in moderation**. If you overeat, you reduce the good benefits because you are providing more calories than your body needs. Watch your serving sizes to ensure that you get the most benefit from each food on the list.

Finally, remember that your best bet for enhancing your brain is to eat fruits and vegetables as close to natural as possible. Cooking can reduce the number of vitamins and minerals that remain in a food.

✓ **Choose fruits and vegetables that are vibrant and colorful to be sure you're getting the most nutrients.**

Finding new recipes can add variety to your menu and help you include more of these top 20 brain enhancing foods into your diet. Your body and brain will thank you!