

Foods That Make You Smarter

Fire up your focus and sharpen your smarts with these healthy brain-boosting foods.

Top Foods for a Better Brain

Better memory, exam results and moods are all just a forkful away — if you pack your plate with the best brain-boosting foods. Let natural compounds in delicious foods act as the first line of brain-health defense, clearing your body of cancer-promoting free radicals and pesticides while nurturing neurotransmitter health and chasing away depression. And remember— when it comes to choosing these foods, go the *organic* route. Many pesticides are neurotoxic and have been shown to lower IQ in kids.



Beets

Beets bring vitamin B to the brain game. This vital nutrient helps you quickly process data and sort through your memories. Fresh beets even serve as natural antidepressants! Sauté and eat beet greens, too. They're packed with heart-protecting folate. Just be sure to avoid canned beets; the containers are likely coated in BPA, a chemical that disrupts our natural hormonal systems.



Anchovies

Your brain thrives on omega-3 fatty acids. The polyunsaturated fats help protect your brain from accelerated aging and memory loss, while shooing away depression and bad moods. Anchovies boost 10 times the omega-3 levels that tuna does and are much lower in harmful seafood contaminants like mercury. As a side benefit, the tiny fish are also loaded with bone-building vitamin D and calcium. Salmon is a great addition too.



Old-Fashioned Eggs

Just like anchovies, pastured eggs are chock-full of brain-protecting omega-3 fatty acids. Eggs have even been called the perfect brain food! But not all eggs are created equally. Eggs from pastured hens—ones raised outside on green grass pastures (happy hens!) — contain two times more omega-3s than standard eggs, and three times more *naturally-occurring* vitamin E, a potent antidepressant and possible Alzheimer's disease preventer. Be sure to eat the yolks—pastured eggs are rich in choline, a brain-boosting compound that promotes neurotransmitters.



Berries

Berries are brain boosters, and for several different reasons. Raspberries and blueberries contain anthocyanin compounds that protect brain neurons linked to memory. Strawberries' fisetin compounds build long-term memory strength. A British study found that eating about a cup of blueberries a day can markedly improve memory in just a few months.

Lard

No, this isn't a typo. The right type of lard can actually do wonders for your brain; specifically your mood. Lard's oleic acid is a mono-unsaturated fat that lowers your risk of depression. It's also a rich source of vitamin D, a vital hormone believed to stave off dementia. For the healthiest lard, be sure to source the product from a farmer who grazes the farm animals on organic pasture free from herbicides and pesticides.



Coconut oil

Coconut oil fat is nearly 50% *lauric acid*, which is converted by the body into *monolaurin* and makes coconut oil effective in treating many bacterial and fungal infections such as candida, athlete's foot, measles, influenza, and hep C. It is well-known for its healing, anti-inflammatory properties and its metabolism-boosting medium chain triglycerides. Great oil for cooking and consuming raw. The anti-inflammatory oils are specifically good in the prevention of Parkinson's disease and other inflammatory brain conditions.



Cayenne Peppers

Hot peppers are bursting with capsaicin, a compound most famous for its use as a natural fat fighter and pain reliever. But according to *The Happiness Diet* authors Tyler Graham and Drew Ramsey, M.D., our brains benefit from the heat-packing compound, too. The human brain is actually loaded with receptors for capsaicin, which release calmness-promoting endorphins, making it easier for us to focus.



Brussels sprouts

Here's a good reason to eat your Brussels sprouts: Scientists have proven that the cruciferous plant is packed with molecules that our bodies convert into diindolmethane (DIM), an immune-system booster that helps protect new brain cells. Its antioxidant content helps clean up cancer-causing free radicals, waste products your body makes when it uses fuel to create energy.



Kale

Just like Brussels sprouts, [kale](#) and its cruciferous cousins cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower act as potent anti-aging agents for the brain. A Harvard Medical School study of more than 13,000 women found that eating these veggies lowered brain age by 1 to 2 years. Money-saving tip? Kale is super easy to grow fresh and organically in your back yard.



Pumpkin Seeds

Pumpkin seeds are tiny treasures filled with tryptophan, a crucial building block of brain health used to create serotonin, a key component of mood and brain health.

Grow it! Try to grow your own steady supply of delectable pumpkin seed treats.



Apples

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away" is very likely true when you consider that this formidable fruit contains catechins, substances that show promise in protecting us from brain damaging chemicals all too common in everyday products. Just be sure to choose organic apples; the catechins are in the fruit's skin, the part exposed to pesticides in chemical farming.



Dark Chocolate

Flavonol compounds in dark chocolate help boost your circulatory system, promoting better blood flow to the brain. In fact, they could even improve your math skills. A 2009 study asking study participants to count backwards in groups of three discovered that those who drank flavonol-fueled hot cocoa calculated more quickly and were less likely to feel tired or mentally drained.