

Fuel Sources for Optimal Brain Functioning

Years back, accompanied by my sibling, we went to visit my grandpa. He sat outside his house enjoying the morning sun. After greeting him, he asked, "Who are you? As a 10yr old girl who was hardly home, I didn't see a big deal, and so I introduced myself. He further asked, "Is that your child?" At this point I was wondering if he was playing mind games. But I told him that was my sister. The next day, he asked the same questions. Worriedly, I ran to our house and told mom what happened. She said, "Your grandpa is elderly. He is gradually losing memory and sight."

Cognitive abilities are paramount to living a high-quality life. Most of us assume that aging is the reason for loss of mental acuity. But let's make this clear. Age is not the only factor causing mental loss. Our daily habits play a major role...quite possibly the most important role.

Imagine what might happen to your mental health if you: don't eat a nutrient-rich diet, live in a polluted environment, have ongoing stress, smoke, and/or drink too much alcohol? Brain cells could be damaged or outright die. Clearly a future no one wants!

Luckily, mental function deterioration is largely preventable and potentially reversible. Our brains are very active and can change at any point throughout our lifespan. We have the power to boost and protect them as well as counteract the effects of aging.

You can achieve this by smartly fueling your brain.

Here are four easy ways you can fuel your brain for lifelong optimum function.

1. Consume more healthy fats

Fats like omega 3 fatty acids found in foods like salmon, walnuts, and flaxseed are great sources of brain fuel. Omega 3 fatty acids also have some health benefits such preventing mental and mood disorders as well as improving mental performance.

These fatty acids play another key role in changing and responding to stimulation. Stimulation improves the expression of many molecules related to learning and memory.

Insufficient omega 3 fatty acids are also linked with heightened mental disorders. They include dementia, depression, dyslexia, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder.

Research shows that those who consumed more omega 3's had an increased volume of the brain's gray matter. This was more evident in the hippocampus- the part of the brain linked with compassion, meditation, and self-awareness.

2. Get Active

Walk, jog, stretch, do gymnastics, etc. The key is to find something you like that you will stick with.

People who exercise have healthier brains. Physical exercises plays a major role in boosting our mental flexibility and sharpness. It can also help keep our brains from shrinking!

If you cannot incorporate intense physical activity into your daily routine, don't panic. Neurologists have found that moderate exercises like walking can stimulate your brain and relieve stress, too.

3. Drink some green tea

Green tea has been widely praised to be a miracle worker for the mind and body. It's rich in nutrients, minerals, and is a great source of antioxidants to protect the body from free radicals.

Other benefits include increasing the body's natural way of burning fats, healthfully boosting metabolic rate, enhancing mental functionality, and improving boosting the working memory.

4. Eat brain boosting foods

It's important to understand the relationship between what we consume and how it impacts your brain. If you eat a balanced diet every day, you'll have a low risk of mental decline as you age.

Some foods act as brain fuel. They improve brain function, prevent age-associated mental decline, and enhance focus and clarity. These foods are:

- **Blueberries** are rich in anthocyanin which supports neuron-to-neuron communication, hence preventing memory loss
- **Dark chocolate** increases the brain's capability of focusing and attention capabilities
- **Nuts** - Nuts are a rich source of magnesium, which is linked to short and long-term memory improvements
- **Vitamin E** enriched foods prevent mental loss, especially in the elderly. They include leafy greens, olives, and whole grains.
- **Zinc** - Zinc is important in enhancing memory and thinking ability. Pumpkin seeds are rich in zinc

In a nutshell: A good combination of exercises and wholesome foods is vital in retaining and even sharpening your brain functioning as you age!

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