

BRAIN FOOD

A HEALTHY GUT = A HEALTHY BRAIN

Your gut microbiome, those good gut bacteria in your large intestine, create your B vitamins, vitamin K and more importantly 90% of your serotonin, the happy hormone. Anyone with mental health issues will probably have gut issues of some sort too.

Your gut microbes love fibre, so look to leafy greens, vegetables of all colours, wholegrains. To learn more about the links with gut health and autism etc check out this link:

<https://foodforthebrain.org/autism-and-the-gut-microbiome/>

Information provided by Paula Fenegan Wellbeing

The brain is the most energy hungry organ of the body. It only weighs 1.5kg but takes at least 25% of all energy requirements. Young children and teenagers need a lot of energy, as they are growing and developing at a faster rate.

The brain is made up of 60% fat, so we need good fats known as essential fats, or EFAs, in our diet for optimum health. They are essential as we need them on a daily basis and we have to get them from our food.

Every cell in the body has a cell membrane that needs fats to keep it intact. This helps to keep things supple. The essential fats make up this membrane. We also need fat to be able to absorb vitamins A, D, E and K from our food. So, fats are important but they need to be the right type.

FOODS TO SUPPORT THE BRAIN

There are certain foods that help the brain to function at its best:



FATTY FISH

Eat Tuna, mackerel, sardines, etc, at least twice a week. If this is difficult, look for Omega 3 oils in supplement form. There are liquids with added lemon to make them palatable.

What does fatty fish do for the brain?

- *Fatty fish is a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids, a major building block of the brain. Omega-3s play a role in sharpening memory and improving mood, as well as protecting your brain against cognitive decline.*

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MEAT LIKE TURKEY AND CHICKEN

These are high in zinc which is good for the immune system, skin, growth.

What does turkey do for the brain?

- *Turkey is a good source of zinc, a trace mineral essential for normal brain function, especially those functions related to learning and memory. Zinc plays a critical role in regulating how the cells in the brain communicate.*
- *Contains tyrosine. This amino acid helps memory and cognitive performance. It is a precursor to dopamine, which we know helps our moods, attention spans, capacity for learning, and even emotional responses.*
- *Turkey meat contains selenium. We understand that selenium helps the brain by reducing free radical damage, providing protection against oxidative stress that degrades brain cells, and offering a barrier against some of the mutations known to cause DNA damage.*



NUTS

Nuts are a source of good fats (EFAs) Try walnuts, almonds.



SEEDS

Seeds such as sunflower seeds, pumpkin, are a good form of fats and minerals. Pumpkin is high in Omega 3 (an EFA) and zinc, particularly good for Immune system, healthy growth and skin.



EGGS

The protein and nutrients in eggs help kids concentrate.



ROLLED OATS

Porridge can be a great source of oats. Quinoa and buckwheat feed your microbiome. These are the beneficial bacteria in your large intestine. Ready Brek pots have a lot of added sugar however.

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GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLES

Leafy greens such as kale, spinach, collards, and broccoli are rich in brain-healthy nutrients like vitamin K, lutein, folate, and beta carotene, calcium, magnesium. Also help to control sugar cravings as they contain chromium



BERRIES

All sorts such as strawberries, raspberries and particularly blueberries help protect brain cells from damage. They are also lower in sugar than other fruits.



DARK CHOCOLATE (85%)

Contains magnesium which is calming and needed for over 200 reactions in the body. It also contains a chemical called BDNF (Brain Derived Neurotrophic Factor) which is essential for learning, memory, mood and for the ability to adapt to changes and challenges.



EXERCISE

Exercise is the best way to improve BDNF (Brain-Derived Neurotrophic Factor). HIIT, Yoga, running can all help.

8 Ways To Increase BDNF Levels - Mental Health Daily

mentalhealthdaily.com/2015/03/30/8-ways-to-increase-bdnf-levels-brain-derived-neurotrophic-factor/

According to, Food for the Brain Foundation.

"For patients with ADHD, regular physical activity improves brain blood flow and balances brain chemicals such as dopamine, noradrenaline and serotonin. This may have a variety of positive brain health outcomes, including improving memory and concentration, decreasing hyperactivity and impulsivity, elevating mood, and supporting individuals with symptoms of anxiety and depression."

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CERTAIN FRUITS

Oranges, bell peppers, guava, kiwi, tomatoes, and strawberries, contain high amounts of vitamin C. Vitamin C helps prevent brain cells from becoming damaged and supports overall brain health.



B VITAMINS

B Vitamins are particularly important for energy and focus. A vitamin B deficiency is linked to irritability and fatigue in children. When both of these vitamins reach optimal levels, individuals with ADHD can experience increased alertness and decreased anxiety, which can help ADHD children focus on their tasks and decrease their hyperactivity.

The humble banana is thought to be an ADHD superfood, as it's high in magnesium, fibre, potassium, and vitamin B6. But don't eat too many.

B Vitamins can be found in:

- Wholegrains,
- Meat (especially liver)
- Seafood
- Poultry
- Eggs
- Dairy products
- Legumes
- Leafy greens
- Seeds
- Fortified foods, such as breakfast cereal and nutritional yeast.



WATER

Water is also essential for the brain to function at it's best. If we don't drink enough the capillaries (the small blood vessels) become dehydrated and enlarged. If you are dehydrated long term, then brain cells shrink, affecting children's brain functions. Those that drink more are found to have higher IQ scores.

Try keeping a jug of water in the fridge at eye level, so you see it, this is a visual queue to drink. Fill it with sliced fruit, cucumber, mint, anything to make it attractive and palatable.

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GREEN POWER SMOOTHIE

Green veggies help slow cognitive decline and are an easy way to get nutrients into kids, as you can disguise the flavour with a piece of fruit.



INGREDIENTS

- 1 small banana
- A handful of frozen blueberries
- 2 large handfuls of spinach
- 1 scoop of protein powder or scoop of Oats
- Pinch of cinnamon(to regulate blood sugar)
- Cover with milk of choice or water if you prefer

Optional Additions

- 1 tsp of chia seeds or sunflower seeds
- ¼ of an avocado. This will make it thicker and creamier.

Avocado will improve the nutrient value as avocado contains omega 3 fats which support all cells and help keep you fuller for longer, plus, a healthy dose of vitamins and minerals that support enhance brain function and support the gut.

Chia seeds also contain omega 3's which are good for the brain.

METHOD

Add all to a blender and blitz until smooth. Add more liquid if you want it thinner to drink, or put in a bowl and eat like a yogurt. Enjoy!



Eat to beat anxiety – try some of these!

- **Greens are high in magnesium that can help calm you.**
- **Brazil Nuts contain selenium to boost mood.**

Your gut microbiome is communicating with your brain all the time. By eating foods like lentils , it feeds the good microbes which support our overall health, including mental wellbeing, hormone health, and immunity

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EASY THAI GREEN LENTIL CURRY



INGREDIENTS

- INGREDIENTS
- 1 tin green lentils
- 1 tin of coconut milk
- 1 tbsp of curry paste (you can try Massaman Curry Paste!)
- 1 Sweet potato OR ¼ of a small squash (when in season)
- 1 onion
- Handful of spinach
- A little bit of olive oil.

METHOD

Slice and dice the onion and sweet potato.

Add a little oil to the pan and cook the onion until soft.

Add the curry paste, coconut milk, green lentils and diced sweet potato.

Cook gently until potato is soft, about 10 mins

Just before serving add in a handful of spinach.

Keep an eye whilst cooking and don't allow it to dry out, add water if necessary.

Serve with wholegrain brown rice.

NOTE. Wholegrain rice can take longer to cook, so soak for at least 20 mins, OR put it in a pan and cover with water before you go to work. When you get back, drain the water and add fresh before you cook it. This will reduce cooking time by 10 mins.

Add some garden peas to the rice to boost the vegetable content.



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FISH NUGGETS



INGREDIENTS

- 50g ground linseeds
- ½ tsp of garlic powder
- ¼ tsp paprika powder
- 1 egg
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 fillets of fish (mix salmon and white fish)
- A little flour for coating

Increase quantities if making for more all the family.

METHOD

Preheat oven to 180 degrees

Slice the fish into thin strips and coat lightly in flour. Leave to one side.

Add the garlic powder and paprika powder to the ground linseeds.

Beat the egg and leave in a bowl

Take the fish strips and dip them in the egg, then the linseed mix, ensuring they are completely covered.

Put a little of the olive oil in a frying pan and add the strips. Just cook for a few minutes to get a colour on the outside.

Transfer to the oven and cook for about 15min or until cooked through.

Serve with mashed potatoes and green veggies.

Linseeds are an alternative to breadcrumbs, making it gluten free.

They are high in fibre and omega 3s.



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STUFFED PEPPERS



INGREDIENTS

- A selection of peppers (allow one per person)
- 1 tin green lentils
- 1 pkt ready-made Quinoa
- 1 pkt mozzarella cheese
- 1 onion
- 1 tbsp of red pesto
- A little olive oil
- Salad to garnish and serve.

METHOD

Preheat oven to 200 degrees.

Slice top off the peppers keep to one side.

Drizzle inside with a little oil.

Put in oven for 15 mins to cook slightly

Slice onion and fry in a little oil

Add the tin of lentils, pesto sauce, or paste of your choosing. Stir around and allow to heat through.

Add the precooked quinoa to make a thick mixture.

Remove the peppers from the oven and add lentil mix.

Put the tops of the peppers back on and put back in the oven for at least 20mins.

5 mins before you are ready to serve, cut the mozzarella into slices and add to the peppers to melt.

Serve with salad.





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Professional Quotes

Dawn Starley - Education Psychologist

Simple lifestyle changes go a long way towards helping to stabilise our moods and gradually, done repeatedly over time, contribute to feelings of control and wellbeing in a 'virtuous cycle' that makes us more likely to take better care of ourselves in relation to how we treat our body and mind (and then more likely to continue to feel better and more in control). What we eat and drink, and the exercise we give our bodies (and minds) are very manageable things to tackle one step at a time. This guide gives a great introduction to this with some practical ideas of where and how to start.