

Health and Wellness News

September 2019

5 foods for brain health



It's back to school season! Whether you have children in school or not, this time of year is a reminder that the more relaxing days of summer are ending and it's time to refocus.

Speaking of focus, many people struggle with brain issues, whether it's brain fog, poor memory, or even dementia. In fact, dementia is a global epidemic affecting 47 million people.

If you think you're still too young to worry about it, think again! The changes in your brain begin to happen decades before symptoms develop. It's never too early to start taking steps to protect your brain health!

Certain nutrients are critical to brain health, especially antioxidants, healthy fats, and phytonutrients (vitamins, minerals and other compounds that come from plants). Here are some key brain foods that can support memory and brain function:

Turmeric—This root is widely used in Indian cooking, and the antioxidant it contains can relax blood vessels, increase blood flow to the brain, and may help with symptoms of Alzheimer's. Turmeric powder can be added to curries and other sauces, and is best absorbed when combined with pepper and healthy fat like coconut oil. It's also available as a supplement.



Blueberries—These delicious berries are rich in antioxidants called anthocyanins, which have been shown to delay cognitive aging. Blueberries are also rich in fiber and are good for heart health. Add some to your oatmeal or smoothies, or eat them by the handful.



Greens—You simply cannot go wrong with adding more of these into your diet, including spinach, kale, broccoli, cabbage, chard, collards, Brussels sprouts, etc. Studies show that eating them once or twice a day decreases cognitive decline. They can be made into salads, put into smoothies, sautéed, made into wraps, steamed, and more.



Legumes—Did you know that legumes are the one food most consistently associated with longer life span? These include any type of beans, peas, lentils, and chickpeas. Not only are they rich in protein and iron, but also in B vitamins that help the brain produce neurotransmitters.



Omega 3 fats—These essential fatty acids are important for heart, brain and eye health, and can reduce your risk of age-related mental decline. You can boost your intake by eating wild salmon, sardines, ground flax seeds, chia seeds, or by taking a fish oil or algae supplement.



**ARE YOU EATING SOME OF THESE FOODS?
IF NOT, YOU'D BE WISE TO START!**

The Healthy Mind Platter

In addition to eating healthy foods, there are certain activities that are essential for maintaining a healthy brain and good mental health. Dr. Daniel Siegel, Clinical Professor at UCLA School of Medicine and Director of the Mindsight Institute, created a Healthy Mind Platter to encourage people to spend some time each day engaging in the following:

Focus time – Focusing on tasks, in a goal-oriented way, that challenge you and make deep connections in the brain.

Play time – Being spontaneous, creative, and enjoying novel experiences.

Connecting time – Connecting with other people (in person) and with nature.

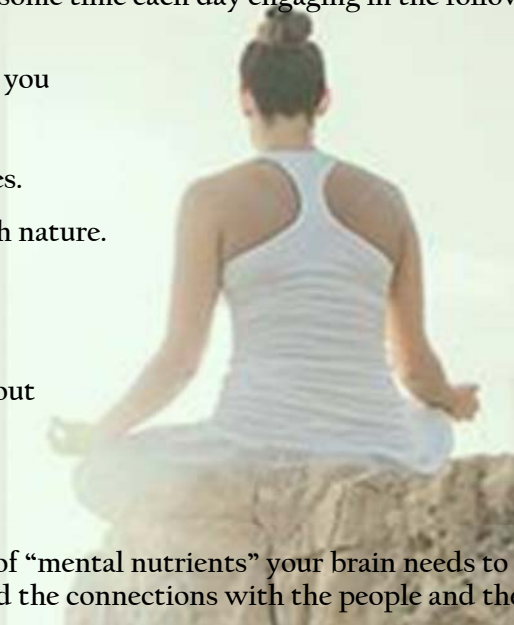
Physical time – Moving your body aerobically.

Time in – Quiet reflection focusing on sensations, images, and feelings.

Down time – Simply relaxing and allowing your mind to wander without any specific goal.

Sleep time – Giving the brain and body the rest it needs to regenerate.

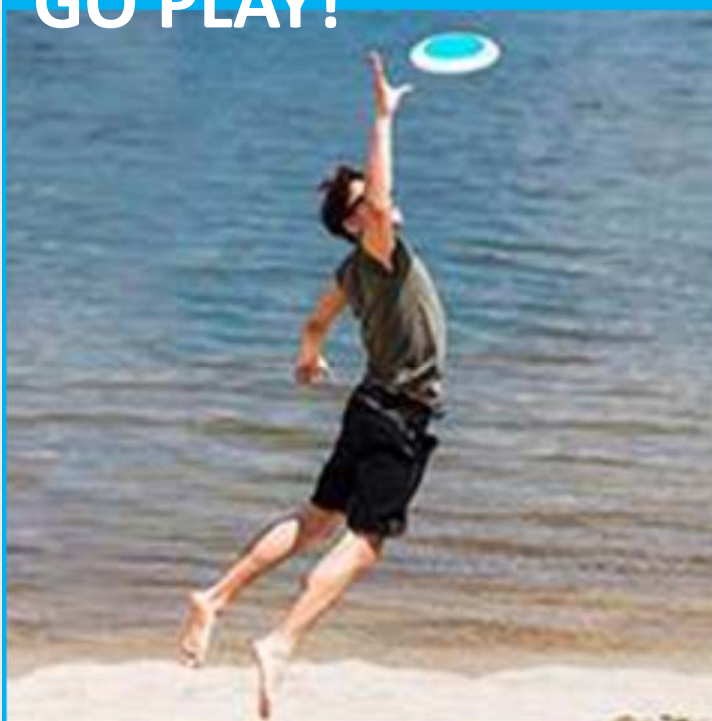
According to Dr. Siegel, these seven daily activities make up the full set of “mental nutrients” your brain needs to function at its best by strengthening the brain’s internal connections and the connections with the people and the world around you.



What a great recipe!

EXERCISE OF THE MONTH

GO PLAY!



Play doesn't have to end simply because you're an adult. Did you notice that the Healthy Mind Platter included play time as an essential activity for mental health?

It's also a great way to increase your physical activity and can be done with or without kids.

Here are some ways to add playtime to your routine to optimize the well-being of body and mind:

PLAY A SPORT. What do you enjoy? Softball, soccer, bowling, volleyball...the possibilities are endless!

RIDE A BIKE. Remember how fun it was to ride around the neighborhood as a kid? That fun is possible now too!

DANCE. Put on your favorite music and get your groove on whether that is by yourself, or with a partner, your kids, or friends.

GO TO THE PARK. Parks offer lots of possibilities including swings, slides, monkey bars, exercise

equipment, throwing a frisbee, playing ball, or simply walking in nature.

PLAY VIDEO GAMES THAT MAKE YOU ACTIVE. Whether you enjoy video games like Wii Fit or phone apps like Pokemon Go, exer-gaming can be a fun way to increase your movement.

**REMEMBER, EXERCISE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE MONOTONOUS OR A CHORE.
DO WHAT'S FUN FOR YOU!**

Recipe of the Month

SOUTHWESTERN SWEET POTATO AND LENTIL JAR SALAD

With summer ending, it's time to get back to routines. Meal prepping mason jar salads can be a great way to get back on track. This salad is different, delicious, and satisfying! It also features one of the brain foods: Lentils.



Ingredients (Servings 4):

Chili lime vinaigrette:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp white wine vinegar
- 2 tsp lime juice
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp chili powder
- 1 minced garlic clove
- 2 tsp honey

Salad:

- 6 cups cubed sweet potatoes
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1/2 tsp chili powder
- 2 cups cooked brown lentils
- 2 cups corn kernels
- 1 thinly sliced red pepper

Instructions:

Pre-heat oven to 425 degrees F. Toss the sweet potato cubes in olive oil and chili powder and roast in the oven for 25 minutes or until cooked thoroughly.

While the sweet potatoes are cooking, mix all vinaigrette ingredients together and set aside.

Once the sweet potatoes are cooked and cooled, assemble the mason jars in this order:

- 1 tbsp of dressing
- 1/2 cup lentils
- 1/2 cup corn
- 1 cup sweet potatoes
- A few red pepper slices



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