BRAIN FOOD

Beans. are slow to digest, and provide the brain with a long-lasting source of energy. Aim to eat half a cup of beans each day, in a bowl of vegetable chili, on a salad, or in a burrito.

Oats. It's hard to beat oatmeal at breakfast. Oatmeal is a whole grain, which you digest slowly, giving your brain and body steady energy. And you get a bowlful of B vitamins and fiber as well as potassium, zinc, and vitamin E.

Blueberries. One of nature's perfect foods, blueberries are packed with nutrients that give them their deep-blue color. One study links blueberries to improved learning and memory.

Salmon. Salmon is one of the best sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 is essential for proper brain function, including memory storage and recall. The American Heart Association recommends two 3.5-ounce servings of fish per week.

Walnuts. While all nuts provide brain fuel in the form of protein and both omega-3 fatty acids, walnuts are best. One study found that students who regularly ate walnuts were better at deductive reasoning. The healthy fat in nuts is still fat, so you don't want to eat too many. Stick to a daily 1-ounce serving, just enough to fit in the palm of your hand.

Avocado. The healthy unsaturated fats in avocados improve blood flow to the brain, which can allow brain signals to travel more effectively and efficiently. This, in turn, may make it easier for you to recall information when taking an exam. Try adding several slices of avocado to your usual lunch sandwich, or make a small batch of guacamole for an afternoon snack.

Spinach. Eating spinach, a rich source of the vitamin folate, which helps maintain proper blood flow in the brain. Folate is also necessary for effective cognition. Sneak spinach into your diet in a green smoothie, salad, or scrambled eggs.

Greek Yogurt. This brain friendly food is full of B vitamins that can boost concentration, and the calcium it contains allows signals to travel more quickly through the brain. The protein in yogurt can also help you stay full, and eating it before an exam can both improve your test-taking performance and prevent a growling stomach.

Hemp seed. It provides brain-powering protein, omega-3s and -6s, and a variety of antioxidants and other nutrients. Their nutty flavor blends well with lots of breakfast foods and baked goods. Stir a couple of spoonfuls into oatmeal, mix with yogurt, sprinkle on cereal, or bake into muffins.

Nourish Your Noggin

Your brain is always “on.” It takes care of your thoughts, movements, breathing, heartbeat, and senses. It works hard 24/7, even while you’re sleeping. This means your brain requires a constant supply of fuel. That “fuel” comes from the foods you eat, and what’s in that fuel makes all the difference. Put simply, what you eat directly affects the structure and function of your brain and, ultimately, your mood. The processed foods so commonly consumed by college students are often high in unhealthy saturated and trans fats, salt, and preservatives. These items make it difficult for your brain to function properly, and they can negatively impact your academic performance. Multiple studies have found a correlation between a diet high in refined sugars and impaired brain function and even a worsening of symptoms of mood disorders, such as depression.

If you have found yourself coasting by on energy drinks and unhealthy snacking, it’s time to make a change. Providing your body with the proper fuel to stay focused and absorb what you learn during those long classroom days can make all the difference.

The brain’s main source of energy is glucose from carbohydrates. Since your mind cannot store glucose like other muscles in your body can, the brain requires a steady supply of glucose from your diet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INCLUDE THESE</th>
<th>LIMIT THESE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green leafy vegetables: Every day</td>
<td>Red meats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other vegetables: At least once per day</td>
<td>Butter and stick margarine: Less than 1 tablespoon per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts: Every day</td>
<td>Cheese: Less than one serving per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berries: At least twice per week</td>
<td>Pastries and sweets: Limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans: Every other day</td>
<td>Fried or fast food: Less than one serving per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole grains: Three times per day</td>
<td>Fish: At least once per week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poultry: At least twice per week</td>
<td>Olive oil</td>
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stonybrook.edu/dining/dietitian

#SimplyHealthyWithSteph