

Brain

# BOOSTERS



## Brain Boosters

**Grains:** any whole grain including whole wheat pasta, whole wheat bread, brown rice, bulgur, buckwheat, quinoa, popcorn or oatmeal

**Fruits:** dark and brightly colored fresh or dried fruit like cranberries, cherries, berries of all kinds (even frozen), plums, oranges, kiwi, grapes & avocados

**Vegetables:** dark leafy greens like spinach, kale and collards, sweet potatoes, Brussels sprouts, peppers, beets, romaine & arugula

**Proteins:** fatty fish like tuna, salmon, sardines, trout, herring, mackerel; lentils, eggs, lean beef, low fat yogurt, cheese and milk; lean chicken and pork

**Other:** walnuts, sunflower seeds, flax, canola and olive oil, green tea and water

## pump up your brain for peak performance

enhance your study session with the right brain food

By Laura Conway, MS, RD

Food plays a major role in how well we comprehend, retain and recall information. Enhance your time in the library or studying with friends by choosing the best fuel.

You have to feed your brain to think clearly. Brains use a lot of energy and need a constant supply of fuel. Water and fats also play critical roles by providing the insulation and fluid needed to conduct signals between nerve endings.

### Foods you should eat more of:

**whole grains:** these are digested much more slowly than refined grains. This means a steady energy supply rather than a sudden gush. Aside from whole wheat pasta consider brown rice, quinoa, faro, barley or oats.

**beans & legumes:** the high fiber, high protein and complex carbohydrate mix in beans and legumes makes them the ideal long term energy food for your brain.

**fruits & vegetables:** dark colored fruits and veggies are important because they contain antioxidants. These

compounds help keep your brain in top form by fighting off free radicals that can damage brain cells.

**fish & Omega-3's:** those same fatty acids that are good for your heart are also good for your brain. Find them in salmon, mackerel, sardines, trout, herring and tuna.

**water:** our brains are mostly water, and even slight dehydration can cause us to think less clearly. Focus on caffeine free and sugar free beverages. Water with a few slices of your favorite fruit is a great way to stay hydrated.

## remember everything

Ever heard “breakfast is the most important meal of the day”? It is. Not only does a good breakfast get your metabolism off to a rip roaring start (i.e. it helps jump start your calorie burning furnaces); but breakfast is also critical to get your brain moving too. After a whole night of fasting your brain is ready for better fuel than coffee. For the best test performance, best recall, best comprehension-eat something before class.

**Best Breakfast Food:** Maybe the most perfect breakfast is a parfait made from low fat yogurt, berries and granola. The low fat yogurt provides protein, and amino acids that help increase alertness, the berries are full of antioxidants to keep your brain healthy, and the granola provides a steady supply of carbohydrates that your brain uses plenty of when you are thinking hard. Not a fan of granola or yogurt? Try a hard boiled egg, whole wheat toast and an apple instead!

## go fish

Yes-fish are good for your brain. The same fish that provide Omega-3 fatty acids for your heart are also great for your brain. Our brains contain a lot of fat and need it for nerve signaling. Without the fat, we just simply cannot recall information in the same way. If you don't eat fish often, you can get the same benefits from an Omega-3 supplement. Look for one from fish oil unless you are a strict vegan, and then you can find them made from flax and walnut oils.

## water, water everywhere

Our brains contain a lot of water. Even being just slightly dehydrated can cloud our thoughts and interfere with comprehension. Sip on calorie free beverages (water preferably) throughout the day.

**TIP: Fill a water bottle with ice, water and a few slices of lemon, strawberry or other favorite fruit.**

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*focus & concentration*

## brain food study snacks

granola with walnuts  
peanuts and cranberries  
green tea  
tuna sandwich on whole-wheat  
whole grain cereal with milk  
fruit and yogurt parfait  
sweet potato fries  
veggie strips and low fat ranch

## the caffeine conundrum

A little goes a long way....that's important to keep in mind when it comes to the effect caffeine can have on your brain. A little bit helps, but too much reverses any improvement in cognition or memory.

## exercise your mind

Exercise is a great way to clear your mind of clutter and excessive thoughts. Go for a walk outside, do some yoga, or run on the treadmill. Just 30 minutes of activity is usually all that's needed to help clear up a foggy brain.



## the glucose connection...

Our brains are very sensitive to small changes in blood glucose (blood sugar). If it drops too low from skipping meals, you will not only feel jittery but you'll also have a hard time concentrating.

### *Brain Food Trail Mix*

1 cup walnuts  
1/2 cup dark chocolate m & m's  
1/2 cup dried blueberries  
1/2 cup dried cranberries  
1/4 cup sesame seeds

Mix all ingredients together in an airtight container and snack on while you study.

*The dark chocolate M&M's aren't just for fun-dark chocolate is loaded with antioxidants!*