



BRAIN HEALTH

Food For Thought March 2011

How Do To Keep Your Brain Strong & Smart

Until just a few years ago, researchers believed that the brain stopped making new neural connections — meaning that our memory began to get irreversibly worse — when the body stops developing, usually in your 20s. Like any other body part, neurons weaken as we age. Loss of brain function due to neural breakdown was assumed to be a normal, unavoidable part of aging.

It turns out that's wrong. In the past few years, it has become clear that you can, in fact, make new neurons starting in your 20s and continuing well into old age. You can literally rewire the brain with new parts as the older parts wear out. How? Simply keep learning. Just as your body can condition new muscle, your brain can rebuild used-up neurons.

There are on-line games like BrainAge, MindFit, and Lumosity that help improve your memory function. But frankly, you don't need fancy computer games. All "mental fitness" means is keeping your memory intact and active — everything from memorizing phone numbers and names to reading and to play Twister and Baseball.

Here are four tips to maintain a sharp mind.

#1. Keep blood pressure down. People with high blood pressure are more likely to develop cognitive impairment later in life.

#2 Take an aspirin a day. One 162-milligram pill helps prevent damaging ministrokes in the brain and appears to reduce the buildup of beta-amyloid, a protein that smothers the brain's neurons.

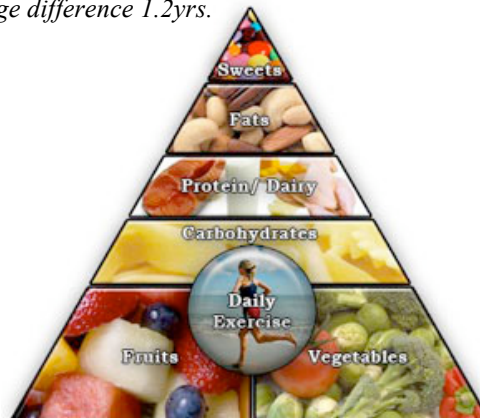
#3 Eat more vitamins. Like E (in nuts and sunflower seeds), B6 and B12 (beef, tuna), and folic acid (leafy greens, citrus, berries), which help keep your brain's chemistry in balance.

#4 Exercise your brain is the best way to rebuild and strengthen those precious neurons. Learn to play chess or the guitar. When you're at a stoplight, try to recall all the teachers you had since grade school. Go dancing, do yoga, go for a brisk walk. or read a book or a magazine.

FEED YOUR BRAIN!

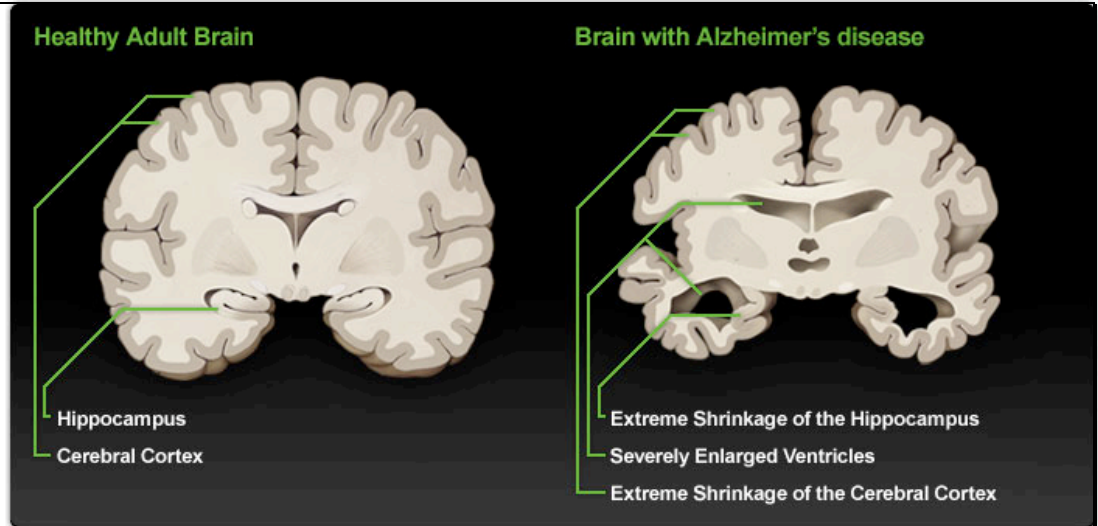
**Which foods are best for brain health?
Check the chart below to see what you
should eat to reduce your Brain Age.**

- **NUTS:** 1 oz. per day contains mono and poly unsaturated fats to keep your arteries clear and levels of precursors of serotonin to boost mood. *Brain Age difference 4.4 yrs.*
- **FISH:** 3 – 4.5 oz. servings per week. Wild salmon, tilapia, catfish, & mahi mahi contain artery-clearing omega-3 fatty acids. *Brain Age difference 2.8 yrs.*
- **SOYBEANS:** 1 cup per day contains heart and artery healthy protein and fiber. *Brain Age difference 1 yr.*
- **TOMATO JUICE & SAUCE:** 8 oz. a day of juice; 2 Tbsp. of sauce a day contain folate, lycopene, and other nutrients to keep arteries young. *Brain Age difference 1 yr.*
- **OLIVE OIL, NUT OILS, FISH OILS, FLAXSEED, AVOCADOS:** 25% of daily calories should be healthy fats containing heart-healthy mono-unsaturated omega3 & omega-9 fats. *Brain Age difference 3.4 yrs.*
- **REAL CHOCOLATE** (not milk chocolate): 1 oz. per day increases dopamine release and provides flavonoids that keep arteries young. *Brain Age difference 1.2yrs.*



How Healthy Is Your Brain?

We have the power to positively influence our brain function throughout life. Research has suggested that our minds can be jump-started, fine-tuned & remodeled throughout adulthood, allowing us to grow and flourish well into the second half of life.



More tips to maintain better brain health throughout life:

- Maximize your intake of DHA, the omega-3 fatty acid that makes up 50 percent of the brain and is a must-have to support lifelong brain health. Find DHA in fatty fish such as salmon and trout, along with algal DHA fortified foods like juice, milk, eggs, tortillas, yogurt, and algal DHA supplements.
- Switch out saturated and trans fats for healthier fats like olive oil, grapeseed oil, or nut oils.
- Aim for a varied diet rich in fresh, washed fruits and vegetables with the skin on to maximize the nutritional punch. Make sure you're eating the colorful ones like red grapes, cranberries, blueberries and tomatoes.
- A healthy diet is the foundation for heart health as well. Manage your weight and keep cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure in check to reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes every day. Exercising is a stress reliever, supports emotional health and helps reduce the risk for chronic diseases. Brisk walking fits the bill if you don't like spending time in a gym.
- Find a brain-stimulating activity that is challenging and enjoyable - reading, dancing, crosswords, learning a new language - and engage in it regularly.
- Get enough sleep and manage stress levels
- Keep working as long as you can and want to
- Spend time with friends and family regularly
- Join clubs or participate in spiritual activities
- Laugh often!
- Volunteer for a cause that is meaningful to you
- Work in the yard or garden
- Learn new recipes & cook with fresh, healthy foods



BRAIN BOOSTING SMOOTHIE

Bananas are high in antioxidants, dopamine and serotonin. Dopamine boosts memory and attention while serotonin elevates mood and helps control appetite, memory and learning. Blueberries contain pigments called anthocyanins that give the fruit its dark color and also boost brain function. They also help protect the brain from stress and may reduce dementia. Hemp nuts are rich in Omega-3's which are essential for the health of your brain and nervous system. Additionally, the compounds found in hemp seeds have been shown to promote memory, learning and immune function. Apple juice prevents the loss of an important neurotransmitter called acetylcholine which is critical for memory and brain health. *Rhodiola Rosea extract improves mood, alleviates depression and can also improve sexual functioning and libido. It's available in natural food stores.

Ingredients:

- 1 banana
- 1/4 cup blueberries
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- A handful of hemp seeds
- 1 tsp *Rhodiola Rosea

Directions:

Combine all ingredients in blender. Blend until smooth. Add ice and enjoy!