

Brain Food for College Students

Ever have days when you just can't seem to concentrate? Most likely, your brain is suffering from a lack of nutrients. When this occurs during exams, not only your health can suffer; your grades can too.

Feeding your brain is just as important as feeding your stomach. With a little know-how, you can prepare for mental tasks without cramming.

Start with a good multivitamin to get your brain in working order. Vitamins and minerals are the core building blocks that cells, tissues, and organs use to perform their functions. You don't even have to leave your desk by ordering vitamins online. Try <http://www.vitasave.com> for a wealth of vitamins and supplements at a discount. Virtually every drug store now carries basic vitamins, too. Vitamin A and zinc are also good choices. New evidence suggests that Vitamin A affects brain cell activity in the hippocampus, the area of the brain linked to learning and memory, while zinc is involved in regulating communication among nerve cells.

Minerals and amino acids that can improve concentration include L-glutamine, a nutrient that converts to glutamic acid in the brain, which is directly usable as fuel, along with glucose, and phosphotidylserine, a newer nutrient that has been found to help concentration.

Herbs can help too. Ginkgo biloba has the ability to improve concentration and has been shown to help retain memory of long strings of numbers, so load up before a math quiz. Ginseng is another herb that provides energy without the jitters of caffeine. Gotu kola rose in popularity when Sri Lankans saw elephants eating the leaves, and you know how elephants never forget! It's reputation for boosting cognitive function spread, and it is now proven that this herb nourishes the nervous system and helps improve memory.

Now that your brain is revved up, try to maintain even blood sugar levels. Avoid refined carbohydrates, such as processed foods, white bread and bleached flour, on days when you really need your brain (like writing a paper or taking an exam). Carbohydrate metabolism causes variations in blood sugar levels that can boost you up then drag you down when you least or need it. Maintaining even blood sugar also

enhances your brain's memory storage capacity. Instead of carbs, reach for high-protein foods. Protein sustains blood sugar levels allowing you to concentrate for longer periods of time.

One of the best foods you can eat for brain power is fish, particularly salmon. Fish contains omega-3 fats that include DHA that helps build membranes around nerve cells. The more DHA in your brain, the easier it is to send messages from cell to cell. Besides salmon, other choices include canned white tuna, mackerel, sardines, herring or anchovies.

But what if you're a vegetarian? You can take Neuromins, a supplement with 100 milligrams DHA per capsule. Neuromins is made from tiny sea plants, which is where fish get their omega-3s. One daily dose supplies about as much DHA in a week as you'd get from one serving of salmon.

Finally, the old adage about eating a good breakfast is true. Many people think they can skip their morning meal and make up for it later in the day. The truth is, eating breakfast will give you a significant head start on nutrition that you'll never make up if you skip it. In fact, the only thing you'll be making up later are calories, or perhaps, your exams!