

TOP 10

BEST & WORST FOODS TO EAT FOR BRAIN HEALTH

BEST

WORST



Avocados. Rich in antioxidants that suppress free radicals, can prevent neuron death, may help prevent neurodegenerative disease. Contains monounsaturated fatty acids and folate, both help prevent Alzheimer's.^{12 3 4}



Blueberries. Researchers have found that eating 2 servings of blueberries per week may delay cognitive decline by 2 ½ years.⁵



Coffee. Has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant compounds that protect the brain from damage. One study showed 3-5 cups of coffee/day at midlife was associated with a 65% decreased Alzheimer's risk.⁶



Dark Chocolate. Cacao is a rich source of flavonoids that promote neuron and blood vessel growth in the brain, stimulate brain blood flow, and may improve recall and cognitive processing.^{7 8 9 10}



Green Tea. Green tea contains EGCG, a flavonoid that can bind to and prevent formation of beta-amyloid proteins, helping to prevent Alzheimer's. White, oolong, black, and peppermint tea have brain benefits, too.^{11 12 13}



Herbs & Spices. Turmeric reduces inflammation and increases blood flow to the brain. Apigenin in parsley, thyme, oregano, and basil, can protect the brain from inflammation, oxidation, and plaque formation.^{14 15 16 17}



Leafy Greens. One study found that a daily serving of leafy green vegetables could slow cognitive aging by 11 years. Put kale, collard greens, spinach, and salad lettuces on your menu!¹⁸



Legumes. High in protein and fiber that may halt or significantly slow Alzheimer's progression by preventing formation of amyloid-β plaque. Get at least 3 weekly servings of beans for optimal brain health.^{19 20 21}



Nuts & Seeds. Anti-inflammatory and rich in sterols, stanols, fiber, minerals, and vitamin E, which protect brain cells from oxidative damage and boost cognitive function.^{22 23}



Whole Grains. Diets rich in whole grains (high in fiber and vitamin E) are associated with lower risk of cognitive decline. Enjoy 3 servings/day of whole grains such as quinoa, amaranth, oatmeal, teff, and buckwheat.^{24 25}



Processed Foods. High in saturated and trans fats, added sugar and refined carbs, all of which are associated with poorer cognitive outcomes.^{26 27 28 29}



Processed Meats. Foods like bacon, sausage, beef jerky, and lunch meats that have been smoked or preserved with nitrites form compounds called nitrosamines, which promote neurodegeneration.³⁰



Red Meat. Concentrated source of heme iron. An excess increases oxidative stress that's toxic to the brain and raises risk for Alzheimer's advancement.^{31 32}



Butter & Vegan Butter Substitutes. Concentrated sources of saturated fat, regular consumption of which is associated with cognitive decline. Studies recommend no more than one tablespoon per day.^{33 34 35 36}



Aspartame. Acts as a stressor in the body, raising cortisol levels and causing excess production of free radicals. Artificially-sweetened sodas are associated with a higher risk for stroke and dementia.^{37 38 39}



Fried Food. Associated with worsened memory and cognitive function, especially when animal-derived ingredients are used.^{40 41 42}



Cheese. A leading source of saturated and trans fats, which have been linked to increased oxidative stress and poorer cognitive outcomes.^{43 44 45 46 47}



Pastries & Sweets. Eating processed baked goods spikes insulin production, which can lead to insulin resistance in the brain, impairing memory and cognitive function.^{48 49 50}



Sugary Drinks. Drinking multiple sugary drinks per day is linked to smaller brain size and worse memory. Regularly drinking two sodas per day may worsen memory function similar to aging more than ten years.⁵¹



Excessive Alcohol. Heavy drinking — defined as drinking more than 8 drinks per week — is associated with faster cognitive decline.^{52 53 54}

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