

# Smart Eating: The Guide to Brain Food

The brain is our most significant organ because it is the part that runs the rest of the show. Without our brains, we would be completely unable to function. We would be without any of the unique thoughts and memories that created us. It is important to exercise the brain as if it were a muscle. This becomes increasingly important as we age, because age can take a major toll on brain function. In fact, studies have shown that those who keep their brains healthy are less prone to certain forms of Dementia, like Alzheimer's disease. Their brains form what is called a "cognitive reserve" to help protect from this disease.

There are many things you can do in order to help keep your brain healthy. You should include brain food in your diet, make sure to get plenty of sleep and physical activity, continue to learn and explore new things, and keep an active social life. If you try to do all of these things you will be well on your way to building that cognitive reserve! We would like to focus on how to eat properly to keep your brain strong. Here are some "brain foods" and what they can do for your brain:

- **Blueberries** - These sweet, juicy little berries have been shown to protect the brain from oxidative stress. Oxidative stress happens when there is an imbalance between the production of oxygen and the body's ability to purify that oxygen. Studies have also shown that blueberries increased the motor ability and learning ability of

aging rats, making them equal to young rats. It is recommended that you eat at least one cup of blueberries daily.

- **Wild Salmon** - Many kinds of fish, including salmon, have Omega-3 fatty acids which are crucial to brain function. Omega-3s also contain anti-inflammatory substances. It is recommended that you eat four ounces of some kind of fish containing Omega-3's at least three or four times a week.
- **Nuts & Seeds** - Nuts and seeds are a great source of vitamin-E and the more vitamin-e you have, the greater your chances of avoiding cognitive challenges in later years. Try to eat an ounce a day of your nuts or seeds of choice. The great thing is that there are so many different flavors and options for both of these brain healthy foods.
- **Avocados** - Are you a guacamole fan? Then you have avocado to thank! However, they aren't just good for a zesty green dip; they also have lots of mono-saturated fat, which helps increase blood flow. Increased blood flow helps keep a healthy brain. They also lower blood pressure, which helps prevent hypertension-a risk factor in the decline of cognitive abilities. You should eat 1/4 or 1/2 of an avocado as a side dish with one of your main courses.

- **Whole Grains** - Whole grains can reduce the risk of heart disease because they increase blood flow, much like avocados. This of course helps the brain, because it creates more blood flow. Try eating something like a 1/2 cup of whole grain cereal, or a slice of whole grain bread a few times a day.

Hopefully, this list gives you plenty of options for smart eating. If not, there are many other tasty foods that could assist in keeping your mind sharp. Also, if you've a loved one who is a resident on our campus, you can rest assured that they too will receive the delicious brain nutrients they need. Our chefs are well trained, our ingredients always fresh, and we are always looking to keep up our residents' health.