



Home > Public > Healthy Aging



Your Food and Nutrition Source It's About Eating Right

In This Section

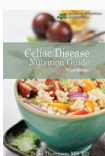
- Healthy Weight »
- Food & Nutrition Topics »
- Diseases, Allergies & Health Conditions »
- Children's Health »
- Women's Health »
- Men's Health »
- Healthy Aging »
- Seasonal & Holidays »
- Sports & Exercise »
- Food Safety »
- Resources in Other Languages »
- What Is an RDN? »

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Weight

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Memory Boosting Foods

By Marisa Moore, MB, RDN, LD

If you're feeling forgetful, it could be due to a lack of sleep or a number of other reasons including genetics, level of physical activity, and lifestyle and environmental factors. However, there's no doubt that diet plays a major role in brain health.

The best menu for boosting memory and brain function encourages good blood flow to the brain — much like what you'd eat to nourish and protect your heart. A recent study found that the **Mediterranean Diet** helps in keeping aging brains sharp, and a growing body of evidence links foods like those in the Mediterranean Diet with better cognitive function, memory and alertness.

Strengthen Recall by Adding These Foods to the Rotation

Eat your veggies. You're not likely to forget this message. Getting adequate vegetables, especially cruciferous ones like broccoli, cabbage and dark leafy greens, may help improve memory. Try a raw kale salad or substitute collard greens for the tortilla in your next sandwich wrap. Broccoli stir-fry is also an excellent option for lunch or dinner.

Be sweet on berries and cherries. Berries — especially dark ones like blackberries, blueberries and cherries — are a rich source of anthocyanins and other flavonoids that may boost memory function. Enjoy a handful of berries for a snack, mixed into cereal or baked into an antioxidant-rich dessert. You can reap these benefits from fresh, frozen or dried berries and cherries.

Get adequate omega-3 fatty acids. Essential for good brain health, omega-3 fatty acids, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) in particular, may help improve memory in healthy young adults. "DHA is the most abundant fatty acid in the brain. It makes sense that if you have higher levels of DHA in the blood, then the brain will operate more efficiently," says Andrea Giancoli, RD, registered dietitian and Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics spokesperson.

Seafood, algae and fatty fish — like salmon, bluefin tuna, sardines and herring — are some of the best sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Substitute fish for meat a couple of times each week to get a healthy dose. Grill, bake or broil fish for ultimate flavor and health. Try salmon tacos with red cabbage slaw, snack on sardines or enjoy seared tuna on salad greens for dinner. If you don't eat fish, discuss supplementation with your doctor or registered dietitian nutritionist. You can get omega-3 fatty acids from fish oil, seaweed or microalgae supplements.

Work in walnuts. Well known for a positive impact on heart health, walnuts also may improve working memory. Snack on a handful of walnuts to satisfy midday hunger, add them to oatmeal or salad for crunch or mix them into a vegetable stir-fry for extra protein.

These foods are not just good for the brain; they also sustain a healthy heart and all parts of the body. While there's no guarantee that these foods will help you remember where you put your keys tomorrow, over time they can support lifelong good health.

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Marisa Moore, MBA, RDN, LD, is a registered dietitian nutritionist and spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

