

## TOP 20 BRAIN-NOURISHING FOODS

Want to stay mentally sharp as you grow older?

Here are the most brain-nourishing foods (listed in alphabetical order) you can consume, based on a variety of scientific studies.

Download this page and use it as a handy reminder of the brain-health powerhouses to add to your grocery list.

**Avocados:** This fruit is packed with monounsaturated fats that support brain structure and blood flow.

**Beans:** Beans are high in antioxidants, phytonutrients, plant protein, iron and other minerals...and have been shown to increase longevity and reduce the risk for stroke (one of the most common neurodegenerative diseases that shares risk factors with dementia).

**Blueberries:** In a Harvard longitudinal study conducted on 16,000 nurses, the consumption of berries—especially blueberries and strawberries—was associated with a lower risk for cognitive decline. Specifically, the study suggested that regular consumption of berries delayed cognitive decline by two-and-a-half years.

**Broccoli:** This veggie is rich in lutein and zeaxanthin, carotenoid antioxidants that can cross the blood-brain barrier and reverse damage caused by free radicals and normal aging. A large study at Harvard Medical School of more than 13,000 women found that participants who ate more cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli had less age-related memory decline.

**Coffee:** The caffeine in coffee is an adenosine receptor antagonist, which stimulates the production of acetylcholine, a known neuroprotective agent in the brain. Coffee also contains potent antioxidants in the form of polyphenols (plant-derived antioxidants that fight free radicals) and chlorogenic acid.

**Dark Chocolate:** Dark, unprocessed cocoa or cacao nibs, the purest forms of chocolate, are incredible sources of flavanol phytonutrients that have been shown to relax arteries and help supply oxygen and nutrients to the brain. In fact, people who eat dark chocolate have a lower risk for stroke.

**Extra-Virgin Olive Oil:** In small amounts as a replacement for saturated fats, extra-virgin olive oil is an excellent source of monounsaturated fatty acids and polyphenols.

**Flaxseed:** It contains the highest amount of plant-based omega-3 fatty acids that have been shown to decrease inflammation and reduce LDL (“bad”) cholesterol levels. Flax also contains lignans, chemical compounds that protect blood vessels from inflammatory damage.

**Herbal Tea:** Mint, lemon balm and hibiscus teas are the three most anti-inflammatory beverages available. Iced herbal tea (with added stevia or erythritol for sweetness) can easily replace sugary drinks in the summer.

**Herbs:** Fresh or dried herbs such as cilantro, dill, rosemary, thyme, oregano, basil, mint and parsley contain 10 times the antioxidants of nuts and berries. Even a small amount boosts your daily antioxidant consumption.

**Leafy Greens:** Leafy greens are a rich source of polyphenols, folic acid, lutein, vitamin E and beta-carotene—all nutrients that are associated with brain health.

**Mushrooms:** Whether they’re fresh, dried or powdered, mushrooms improve overall immunity and reduce inflammation in the blood vessels of the brain. Cremini mushrooms are an excellent plant source of vitamin B-12, which is linked to a lowered risk for Alzheimer’s disease.

**Nuts:** Nuts provide the highest source of healthy unsaturated fats, which have been shown to reduce the risk for Alzheimer’s in multiple studies.

**Omega-3 Fatty Acids (derived from algae):** High-powered, plant-based omega-3s reduce inflammation and boost the immune system.

**Quinoa:** One of the most nutrient-rich foods, quinoa is the only grain that’s a complete protein source (most grains lack the amino acids leucine and isoleucine). It also contains ample fiber, vitamin E and minerals such as zinc, phosphorus and selenium—all essential building blocks for brain cells and their supporting structures.

**Seeds (Chia, Sunflower):** Seeds are high in vitamin E and other brain-boosting minerals.

**Spices:** Spices contain the highest amounts of antioxidants per ounce compared with any other food and are excellent at supporting the brain’s innate detox systems. Both spices and herbs such as cinnamon, cloves, marjoram, allspice, saffron, nutmeg, tarragon and others should be a regular part of our diet...not just a once-in-a-while addition. Curcumin, an extract of turmeric, is an antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-amyloid powerhouse. In studies of both animals and humans, curcumin has been shown to have a direct effect in reducing beta-amyloid.

**Sweet Potatoes:** Packed with phytonutrients, fiber, vitamins A and C, and minerals, this tuber actually has the ability to regulate blood sugar. Its anti-inflammatory effects have also been documented in numerous studies.

**Tea:** Green tea contains green tea catechin, another polyphenol that activates toxin-clearing enzymes.

**Whole Grains:** Whole grains are packed with cholesterol-lowering fiber, complex carbohydrates, protein and B vitamins. The starch in whole grains such as oats, buckwheat, millet, teff, sorghum and amaranth is the most beneficial type of complex carbohydrate—it both feeds good bacteria in the gut and provides an excellent source of sustained energy for the brain.

**Source:** Excerpted from *The Alzheimer’s Solution* by Dean Sherzai, MD, PhD, and Ayesha Sherzai, MD, published by Bottom Line Books (BottomLineStore.com).