

Can Foods Improve Memory?

Contributed by Webmaster

In the quest to improve memory and concentration many seniors have turned to food and nutrition to improve memory. Some even call it brain food. Certain foods and nutrients that are sometimes used to improve memory, concentration and the health of the brain.

While some studies have shown that some foods may improve memory and concentration, motivation and memory; there is no one one magic food for memory. Certain nutrients contained in foods are used by the body to manufacture brain chemicals. Some of these chemicals have been shown to decrease as we age. Foods rich in these nutrients may improve reaction time, concentration and memory.

Proteins may improve memory by enhancing the brains production of dopamine, which is a natural chemical that helps to keep you alert. Dopamine from protein isn't available to the brain until four hours after eating foods that contain protein. Some recommend keeping a steady source of protein available to the body by eating 4-6 ounces of meat or almonds, fish and other protein sources, each day to meet your needs.

Some studies suggest that carbohydrates in food can increase the body's production of serotonin. This is a brain natural chemical that may improve mood. A combination meal of carbohydrates, proteins and vegetables can help to stabilize the effects of serotonin and blood sugar. Blood glucose in the blood stream is the major source of energy for the brain so eating infrequently will decrease your ability to be alert, concentrate and remember.

Omega-3 fatty acids have also been shown to preserve brain health. These nutrients are found in fatty fish, flaxseed oil, canola oil, walnuts and omega-3 eggs. Sixty percent of our brains solid matter is essential fatty acids. These fatty acids make up a large portion of the communicating membranes of the brain, which consistently replenish themselves. An added benefit of omega-3 fatty acids is that they improve heart health.

Iron deficiency can be a risk factor to poor performance since the iron is needed to carry oxygen to the brain and is used to make brain neurotransmitters, especially those that regulate the ability to pay attention which is crucial to learning. According to a study in Britain researchers studied 595 girls and found a correlation between low iron levels and poor cognitive skills. Even a very small drop in iron levels cause a fall in IQ scores. Too much iron can also cause problems, so iron supplement pills should be avoided unless you have a known deficiency. The best sources of iron are in beef, fortified whole grain breakfast cereals, raisins, dried apricots, spinach and legumes.

There is no magic food that improves memory. Good healthy nutrition can improve attention, blood glucose to the brain, oxygen to the brain, and concentration. Pay attention to your diet, your vitamins and your health to preserve and possibly improve your memory.