

The naturopathic advisor



Naturally Good Health has teamed up with experts from the College of Naturopathic Medicine to answer some of your burning health questions. This issue, you asked:



Which foods naturally increase brain power?

What you eat can play a significant role in how well your brain functions day to day and throughout life. The following are some of the best evidence-based foods for improving brain function.

● **Oily fish:** The best source of omega 3 fatty acids can be found in fish, such as salmon, mackerel, and sardines. Alternatively, you can take a good quality fish oil supplement that provides between 3-4g combined EPA and DHA per dose.

Omega 3 fats have benefits across all age groups, from foetal and infant brain development, right through to prevention of age-related cognitive decline and reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

● **Blueberries:** Blueberries have impressive high antioxidant levels that may improve brain function by strengthening communication between brain cells, helping to improve memory. The antioxidants in blueberries are also associated with a reduced risk of age-related cognitive decline, especially in the elderly.

● **Eggs:** Eggs contain choline, a compound that is not only essential for the transport of fat in the body, but is a precursor for the neurotransmitter, acetylcholine. Acetylcholine helps to regulate memory and improves mood. Most of the choline in eggs is found in the yolk (115mg/yolk). Women need at least 425mg choline per day, and men 550mg/day.

● **Dark chocolate:** Everybody likes to hear that

chocolate is good for you, and this is no myth. Cacao and dark chocolate (think 70 per cent cacao content and above) is packed with a group of antioxidants called flavonoids, which have been shown to improve mental performance, memory and mood.

● **Coffee:** Used strategically, the caffeine in coffee increases alertness, improves focus and concentration. Drinking coffee before exercise, an exam or other mentally demanding task might be just what you need to optimise your performance! Be conscious of consumption, however, as caffeine after 2pm may affect your sleep. And poor sleep quality has a direct negative impact on the health of your brain!



Your expert

Your question has been answered by Nutritionist and College of Naturopathic Medicine graduate, Pamela Ryan. Train at CNM for an exciting new career in Naturopathic Nutrition, Herbal Medicine, Acupuncture, or Homeopathy. Join us at our next free open evening. Visit www.naturopathy.ie or call 01 6725036.

Back to the

CLASSROOM

Health Stores Ireland turns its attention to the important matter of autumnal health as the children head back to school.

There are wonderful poems about autumn moods and colours, but Jack Prelutsky's lines from a classroom have a slant many youngsters will share:

'The leaves are yellow, red and brown, a shower sprinkles softly down, the air is fragrant, crisp and cool, and once again, I'm stuck in school!'

So, it's back to lunchboxes, homework and timetables, and autumn can be a bittersweet time as the freedom of warmer days becomes a memory. But in many ways, the change of season is a better time to take stock than the New Year, and a good opportunity to plan for new approaches and fresh schedules.

A well-chosen diet to ward off problems is key to maintaining good health. Some of my favourite fresh seasonal dishes are creamy butternut squash or celeriac soup, roasted root vegetables and baked sweet potatoes. Head for your nearest farmers' market for kale, cabbage, carrots and brassicas fresh from the fields as you'd seldom find in a supermarket. Bear in mind the immune-boosting properties of onions and garlic; a cut clove of garlic, the world's most widely used medicinal herb, rubbed on the sole of a foot can help break up mucus, and is antifungal, antiviral and antibacterial (but not advised for anyone on blood thinners).

Reishi mushrooms in capsule form are rapidly gaining popularity as their immune-boosting beta glucans are especially effective against chest infections. Most people now are aware of echinacea's benefits



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for immunity, and the importance of probiotics for a healthy immune system from birth onwards is firmly established.

No sun and shorter daylight hours? Remember vitamin D, without which our mental as well as physical health would suffer, available in spray as well as capsule form, for babies, children and adults.

Besides their fresh produce, a good reason to shop in farmers' markets is to avoid the plethora of plastic, which enfolds most of what we find in supermarkets. Check out www.repak.ie for facts and figures. Did you realise that part of the 'paper' cup of your takeaway coffee will outlive you due to its plastic lining? Your plastic-handled toothbrush will also reach a centenary before you do.

Visit Health Stores Ireland shops for reusable cups to hand to your barista, choose bamboo toothbrushes, detergents in refillable containers, and lots of other eco-friendly options. Happy to oblige!

Find out more at www.healthstores.ie