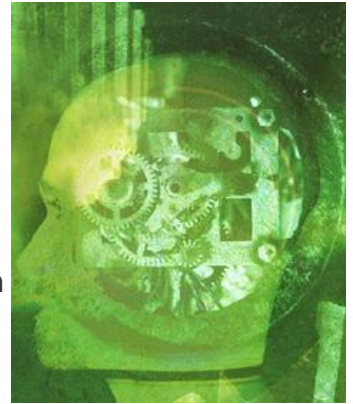


Brain Food: How to Eat Smart

How you eat can affect your mind at a fundamental levels. Here are five things you should know about feeding your brain:

1. Don't overdose on sugar

Your brain, which accounts for 2 percent of your body weight, sucks down roughly 20 percent of your daily calories. It demands a constant supply of glucose. But this doesn't mean that you should slurp soda to keep your brain functioning optimally. In fact, high glucose levels slowly but surely damage cells everywhere in your body, including those in your brain.



2. Become a grazer

To optimize brain power, one tactic might be more frequent but smaller meals. Your brain works best with about 25 grams of glucose circulating in your blood stream -- about the amount found in a banana.

3. Eat foods that don't raise blood glucose levels

Pretzels cause blood sugar to rise very quickly. Raw carrots, however, do not. High fiber carbohydrates raise blood glucose levels relatively slowly, and combining them with fat or protein can slow absorption even more. The key is a balanced diet, where all macronutrients -- carbohydrates, fats and proteins -- are given their due.

4. Know your fats

Not all fats are equal. Trans fats, common in fast food, are the worst. However, your brain is 60 percent fat, and very low levels of cholesterol have been associated with depression, aggression and anti-social behaviour. Essential fatty acids, such as omega-3s, are proving valuable in treating depression and other psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia, as well as benefiting infant brain development.

5. Know yourself

Food affects everyone's brain a little differently. Listen to your body, and find out what choices are right for you.

Sources:

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- [Cell October 3, 2008; 135\(1\):61-73](#)
- [Journal of Nutrition, Health & Aging September-October 2006; 10\(5\):377-85](#)
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