

Smart foods for smart brains

Perhaps one of the most amazing facts about the human body is how invisible its workings are to us. In command at all times is the brain – often dubbed our “black box”.

Although it accounts for just 2 per cent of our total body weight, it consumes a fifth of all the oxygen and a quarter of all the glucose in our body – and that is when we are at rest. Our brain needs fuel, just as the rest of our body does, and the foods that we eat directly affect its performance. By eating a nutritious diet we can boost IQ, improve mood, be more emotionally stable, sharpen memory and keep our mind young.

Thinking is a biochemical process and the food we eat directly affects the brain chemicals required for us to think and make decisions, control body movements, speak, see and hear. Ideas, planning and emotions all begin in the brain which is also the source of memory and our ability to reason, communicate and solve problems. A responsible job – and because the brain is so complicated and works 24 hours a day, it is no wonder that it needs regular and adequate fuel.

Our brain is the greediest organ in the body with some very specific dietary requirements.

So what will really boost our brain power – and what will not? That familiar villain, saturated fat, is just as bad for our brain as it is for our other organs.

Not all fat is bad news, however. Our brain is mostly made of fat and therefore requires fatty acids, such as the omega 3 fats, found in fish, nuts and seeds for good health.

From conception to old age, each phase of life can benefit from a healthy diet, packed with nutrients conducive to keeping our brain nourished. In utero, infancy and childhood its development is faster than at any other time in our life. Research shows that IQ, concentration and memory can be improved through a child’s diet and in particular, fish and evening primrose oils can help combat the problems that come with ADHD and dyslexia.

Maintaining a healthy, balanced diet in adulthood can help us avoid problems like Alzheimer’s Disease and depression that could affect our brain in later life. Indeed, researchers from Aberdeen University believe they have made a major breakthrough in the battle against Alzheimer’s. They have found that older people whose diets are high in omega 3 oils excel in mental tests compared to those without the oils in their diet. This research has added weight to previous international studies. alert and ward off fading memory and support mental stamina.

We live in a region which is historically famed for its fishing and farming and which today still produces natural foods of worldwide prestige. We have also produced some of the most brilliant brains on the planet, long before the scourge of the TV supper and fast-food outlet.

Think about it – what did those people eat? Fish in abundance, organic meats and game, vegetables, nuts, seeds and fruit in season. Not an E number in sight. Perhaps we could take a lesson from this page in history.

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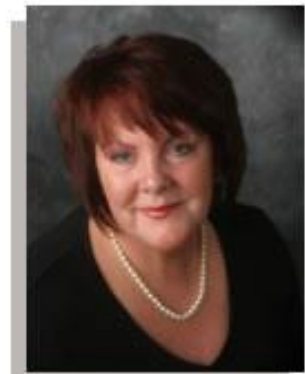
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