

The Nutrition Exchange with Alyssa Weber, RDN, CD

The Nutrition Exchange allows readers to submit nutritional questions to be answered by a Registered Dietitian. Questions can be mailed to the Aging & Disability Resource Center of the Lakeshore, Attn: Nutrition Exchange 1701 Michigan Avenue, Manitowoc, WI 54220. We request that you include your name when submitting a question. **All names will be kept confidential.**

Dear Alyssa,

As I age I am more and more concerned about keeping my brain healthy and preventing memory loss. Does my diet affect my brain's health? Is there something I should be eating to keep my brain healthy?

Sincerely,

Brainy about Brain Health

Dear Brainy,

How we fuel our bodies has an effect on every function of our body. We all know that what we eat affects our heart health, our weight, and can determine how we control diseases such as diabetes. But did you know that what we eat can also affect our brain health?

DHA

Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) is an omega-3 fatty acid which is important for brain health. Researchers think that DHA may be able to prevent and slow down the progression of Alzheimer's disease. DHA is found in fatty, cold-water fish such as salmon, sardines, and herring.

Curcumin and Vitamin D₃

Curcumin, a compound found in turmeric powder, appears to slow the formation and possibly destroy already formed plaque deposits in the brain that cause Alzheimer's disease. Research has also found that when vitamin D₃ is combined with curcumin, the combination seems to stimulate the immune system to clear the brain plaques associated with Alzheimer's disease. Vitamin D₃ is synthesized in the body when

exposed to sunlight. You can also find Vitamin D in fatty fish, fortified milk, mushrooms, and in supplement form.

Antioxidants

Vitamins A, C, and E may help to reduced risk of cognitive decline and Alzheimer's disease. Vitamin A is found in sweet potatoes, liver, spinach, carrots, and pumpkin. Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits, red peppers, Brussels sprouts, strawberries, and broccoli. Vitamin E is found in wheat germ, sunflower seeds, almonds, and peanut butter. There are many other sources of these vitamins as well.

Polyphenols, other powerful antioxidants, can also help promote brain health by preventing the oxidative stress of brain cells. Polyphenols are found in fruit juices, tea, coffee, and red wine, as well as in vegetables, cereals, chocolate, and dry legumes.

Avoiding Obesity

Obesity increases the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. One likely reason is because body fat promotes inflammation. Type 2 diabetes is also linked to a higher risk of Alzheimer's disease, and obesity is a risk factor for the development of Type 2 diabetes.

Walnuts

Walnuts contain omega-3 fatty acids and polyphenols, both of which promote brain health. The recommendation is to eat 1-1.5 ounces of walnuts per day to benefit from walnut's protective effects.

Blueberries

Blueberries seem to reduce the rate of aging and reduce or delay the onset of degenerative disease of the brain. If including blueberries in your daily diet, aim for a half cup per day.

In conclusion, it is important to consume a variety of healthy foods from all food groups as they all have beneficial components. There is no one miracle food, they all work together to promote a healthy body and mind.

Adapted from "Neurological Health: Food for Your Brain" on www.nutrition411.com

