

## EAT YOUR WAY TO A HEALTHY BRAIN: improve memory, mood & focus

### Eight Life Hacks to a Better Brain

1. **Hydrate Well.** Drink plenty of filtered water – about half your weight in ounces (ex. 116lbs/2 = 58 oz or about 7 cups). Try homemade herbal tea (iced or hot) or water infused with citrus or berries. Slowly minimize the liquid sugar and energy drinks in your diet (sugar and caffeine do not encourage stable moods, energy, or focus). Staying well hydrated will help keep you alert and support your memory, focus, and ability to learn.

2. **Crowd Out.** Keep in mind the 80/20 rule. Focus on regularly adding healthy habits in to your life which will automatically crowd out less healthy habits. The goal is progress over perfection (perfectionism breeds stress which can affect your moods and dumb you down)! Encourage your family to get involved or to support you in your healthy goals.

3. **Eat a PFF Breakfast.** Start your day with a breakfast that is high Protein & Fat with some Fiber. Move away from sugary/processed breakfast foods which cause a mid-morning energy crash, negatively affect mood, and impair memory and learning. If you hate eating early in the day, pack a healthy snack to eat mid-morning; this will curb sugar cravings and improve your energy and ability to concentrate.

4. **Listen To Your Body.** Our bodies give us cues all the time. Pay attention to your cravings/food aversions and how you feel after eating certain foods. How is your energy level, mood, behavior? Do you experience physical symptoms like skin rashes or burning, diarrhea, bloating, or a general feeling of being unwell? These cues can indicate hidden food allergies or sensitivities – discuss them with your parents or doctor. Allergies and sensitivities can have a negative impact on behavior and mood.

5. **Eat Regularly.** Your mood, memory, focus, and energy will all benefit from you eating regularly (ex. every 3-4 hours). Consider keeping healthy snacks in your locker (ex. trail mix and fruit). When you go too long between meals you may get jittery, grouchy, and crave sugar for a quick energy boost.

6. **Be a Qualitarian.** About 60% of the calories people eat today come from products that didn't even exist 20 years ago – these are not “real food”. Make simple upgrades to your nutrition. For example, swap whole grains and natural sweeteners for refined/processed versions. Choose quality fats and proteins for fast-food/processed foods.

7. **Prioritize Produce.** Most Canadians do not eat enough produce each day. Challenge yourself to double the amount you are currently eating (or get a minimum of 5 servings/day to start). Fruit and Veggies provide vitamins, minerals, antioxidants (which protect us from damage to our cells) and fiber to support our health, including mood and cognitive function. Aim for ‘whole food’ fresh or frozen produce (not juice or processed versions).

8. **Feed Your Brain Fat.** The human brain is nearly 60% fat. Essential Fatty Acids (like Omega 3's) are essential to brain health and performance and must be obtained through our food. Talk with your parents about possibly supplementing with fish oils (EPA and DHA) and aim to get more cold water fatty fish in your diet. Other good fats include: extra virgin olive oil, coconut oil, organic butter, ghee, avocado oil, olives, nuts/seeds, eggs, avocado, coconut, and even dark chocolate (aim for 70%).



## Brain-Healthy Snack Ideas

- Breakfast burrito (veg omelet/meat), bean/rice/salsa/cheddar burrito, chicken/veggie wrap
- Smoothies (pack in a jar with lid) or smoothie popsicles
- Fruit salad, raw fruit, frozen grapes, apple chips (slice and dehydrate 3 hs at 200F, cinnamon)
- Veggies and hummus, salad in a jar (w/ protein and good fat), homemade sweet potato fries
- Apple slices with nut butter, walnuts or hemp hearts, a sprinkle of dark choc chips or coconut
- Homemade trail mix, honeyed pecans, spicy roasted pumpkin seeds or roasted chickpeas
- Popcorn drizzled with melted coconut oil/honey/nut or seed butter combo
- Plantain chips or fresh plantains cooked in coconut oil and sprinkled with cinnamon
- Homemade granola with nut milk or with Greek yogurt/berries/splash maple syrup
- Sprouted organic toast with avocado/sea salt, nut butter/cinnamon, or grilled salmon melt
- Coconut flour pancakes, oat/banana pancakes, spelt/buttermilk/blueberry pancakes
- Homemade coconut macaroons, mud balls, homemade granola bars, grain-free muffins
- Kale chips (rub in avocado oil and seasoning, bake at low heat till crisp)
- Fudge pudding or pudding pops, homemade hot chocolate (cacao, vanilla, sea salt, milk, honey)
- Overnight Oats (ex. ½ c oats, ¾ c milk of choice, hemp, coconut, cinnamon, dates or m. syrup)
- Rice pudding or quinoa parfait (layered w/ berries, Greek or coconut milk yogurt, coconut sugar)

## Brain-Healthy Treats

FUDGE PUDDING OR PUDDING POPS	NO-BAKE MUD BALLS
<p>2 ripe avocado            1 ¾ c coconut milk (adjust for desired thickness)            ¼ c cacao powder            ½ c coconut sugar, maple syrup, or banana            2 tsp pure vanilla extract            1 tbsp coconut oil (or nut butter)            ½ tsp sea salt            *mix up well in high-powered blender. Scoop into bowls and chill or fill popsicles molds and freeze.</p>	<p>½ c nut or seed butter            1/3 c - ½ c raw honey            ½ c unsweetened coconut flakes            1 c oatmeal (more as needed to form balls)            ½ c dark chocolate chips, cacao nibs or dried fruit            ½ c seeds (sesame, sunflower, hemp, chia)            *melt honey and nut butter over low heat in medium pot. Take off heat and add other ingredients to pot. Mix well. Add more oats as needed to get a good rolling consistency. Form into 20 small balls.</p>
SMOOTHIE COMBINATIONS	PUMPKIN BREAKFAST COOKIES
<p><b>Caribbean Queen:</b> ¾ c frozen mango chunks, ½ c coconut milk, 1 tbsp chia seeds (opt*cinnamon, coconut flakes, turmeric, banana)  <b>Straw-nana:</b> 1 frozen banana in chunks, ½ c almond milk, ½ c frozen strawberries (opt*protein powder or hemp hearts, cinnamon)  <b>Blue Magic:</b> ¾ c frozen blueberries, 1 tbsp nut butter, ½ c milk of choice (opt*vanilla, cinnamon, 2 tbsp rolled oats or coconut)  <b>Not Easy Being Green:</b> 1 green apple in chunks, ½ c frozen spinach, ½ " pc ginger cut up, ½ c water (opt*1/2 avocado or lime juice, 1 tbsp raw honey)            *blend together and drink or freeze in popsicle molds.            *pre-assemble in ziplok bags and freeze            *from www.recipetineats.com</p>	<p>¼ c coconut oil (or butter, if preferred)            ¼ c raw honey (or maple syrup)            2 c oats            2/3 c dried cranberries (or dark choc chips)            2/3 c pumpkin seeds (ground, if preferred)            ¼ c ground flax            1 tsp pumpkin pie spice (or allspice, cinnamon...)            ½ tsp sea salt            ½ c pumpkin purée            2 eggs, beaten            *melt oil and honey together on low heat. Remove from heat and mix in eggs and pumpkin. Add to the dry ingredients and combine well. Line a baking sheet and form 12 cookies. Bake 15-20 mins at 350F until edges are golden. *from lelalicious.com</p>



