

# Food for Thought

*Give your brain what it needs to support health, mental clarity and focus*

Your brain controls every part of your body. It organizes thoughts, feelings and even comes up with great ideas that surprise us. Your brain is even more amazing than any computer that ever will be invented. Just like a computer needs software and hardware updates so does your brain need food to keep it going.

Your brain is 60% fat. It begins to harden with age and becomes inflexible. Omega -3 essential fats put the elasticity back into the tissues which helps the brain to do its job. It also increases size and keeps the brain functioning well.

A 2007 Pittsburg study found that people who eat omega 3 fatty acids had a much greater brain volume than people who do not. Taking omega-3 also helps to regulate mood and emotion. Individuals who are even-tempered make the best decisions. Omega-3 fatty acids can be found in Salmon, flax seed, whole grains, fish, walnut oil and dark green leafy vegetables. Eat a diet rich in omega- 3 and also take supplemental omega-3.

Antioxidants help to neutralize free radicals in your body including the brain. Eating foods rich in antioxidants can protect your brain from free radical damage. Foods that contain antioxidants include fresh fruits such as blueberries, strawberries, grapes and vegetables such as broccoli and other green leafy vegetables. Research has shown that green tea also contains antioxidants. Water keeps everything hydrated so drink at least 8 glasses of water daily.

Sleep is also important for the brain to function normally. Sleep rejuvenates the brain and most cell repair is done at sleep. A 2002 study done at the University of San Diego found that verbal and math skills are impaired by people who don't get adequate sleep. (This can be debated). It is also important to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily. Exercise assists with circulating oxygenated blood to the brain throughout the body. Lack of exercise slows blood circulation and this can makes the body tired. Lack of exercise also puts one at risk for other types of illnesses. A brain that is tired works harder to do routine tasks. Keeping your brain active helps to improve recall, memory and thinking processes. Research has shown that people, who read, do cross word puzzle or brain teasers are able to keep their brain sharp.

We may not be able to stop time but as one wise woman always says, 'prevention is better than cure,' so take information seriously and use it wisely.

Reference

William, S. (2007). Preventative Strategies for a Healthy Brain. Vita Journal, 5, 6

*This article brought to you by the Division of students affairs, Health Services Department. A hard copy is available upon request from Health Services Center.*