Walnuts: A Back to School Brain Food

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It’s hard to believe, but we’re already in the latter half of summer with back to school season on the horizon. While you’re making your list for notebooks, binders, and markers, don’t forget about the food! Back to school is a time that generally brings more structure and regularity to our eating, making it the perfect time to establish some healthy habits.

We all know that food is fuel, but did you know that certain foods have been studied for their abilities to support memory and overall brain health? Walnuts are one of these foods, and a wonderful snack to tote along in lunchboxes and backpacks. A recent study using dietary data from over 5,000 adults found that simply eating a small handful of walnuts per day was associated with better performance on a series of memory tests. This should come as no surprise, as walnuts are packed with key nutrients including vitamins, minerals, and plant-based omega-3 fatty acids.

So, how do we get more of these brain-friendly nuts into our diet? A simple way is through snacking. Snacking gives us an opportunity to supplement our regular meals with additional nutrient-dense foods, and keeps us sustained throughout the day. Create a “power snack” by pairing walnuts with fresh fruits, which also support brain health. You can even make it seasonal by focusing on what’s fresh during the fall! Here are a few ideas to get you started:

DIY **Walnut and Fig energy bars**, perfect for car rides.

**Apple-walnut muffins**, a great way to snack between and early breakfast and late lunch.

**Simple walnut hummus** topped with fresh pomegranate arils, an ideal after-school snack.

Beyond snacking, cooking with walnuts means even more opportunities to pair with other foods that maintain cognitive function, such as fatty fish and fresh veggies. Walnuts are extremely versatile in the kitchen, and can act as a breading, sauce thickener, and even a meat substitute! Here are a few dishes to get you started:

**Walnut-Crusted Salmon with Stewed Chickpeas and Kale**

**Beet, Goat Cheese, and Walnut Salad**

**Orange Citrus Halibut with Walnut-Pomegranate Relish**

Remember- aim for a “handful per day” during this back-to-school season!

Click [here](#) to find a location near you.