



Nutrition for Optimal Brain Health

Beginning Tips & Things to Consider

1. Remember, small changes at first are ok! It can be overwhelming to do all at once. Start by choosing just a few foods you consume the most of, and replace those with healthier versions.
2. Remove artificial food colorings, flavorings, and preservatives from the diet as soon as possible.
3. Add more high-quality protein to the diet, and buy organic or grass-fed as often as possible. Cut sugar out of the diet as much as possible.
4. Each snack or meal should contain a protein with every carbohydrate (preferably a complex carbohydrate) and if possible, a healthy fat.
 - For example: apple with almond butter or a salad with sunflower seeds and organic chicken or eggs added (if eggs are not an allergy or sensitivity issue).

Foods & Nutrients for Better Brain Health

MAGNESIUM

- Involved in functioning of neurons and activity of fatty acids, among many other processes in the body.
- Children with hyperactivity showed an improvement when given magnesium supplementation.
- Plays a role in the production of noradrenaline (Ritalin is thought to work by correcting a deficiency of noradrenaline).

Food Sources: Pumpkin seeds, Swiss chard, sesame seeds, quinoa, cashews, navy beans

B VITAMINS

- B₆ is a co-factor in the synthesis of neurotransmitters.
- B₁ (thiamine) turns glucose into energy for the brain to use as fuel
- B₅ for acetylcholine production

Food Sources: Romaine lettuce, asparagus, spinach, sunflower seeds, chicken, collard greens, carrots, cabbage, crimini mushrooms, carrots, broccoli

PROTEIN

- Building blocks for amino acids, which are essential in the production of neurotransmitters.
- Helps to keep blood sugar levels steady
- Important to start the day off with, especially before school or work, to avoid blood sugar "dips", and to keep you fuller longer.
- Needed for neurotransmitter production
- Levels of many amino acids are often low in those with ADHD, negatively affecting important neurotransmitter production, such as those involved in memory, mood, attention, behavior and learning.

Food sources: turkey, chicken, grass-fed beef, spinach, Crimini mushrooms, salmon, asparagus, lentils, eggs, broccoli



IRON

- Serum (blood) levels of ferritin are lower in those with ADHD than of those in a control group.

Food sources: Grass-fed beef, liver, sunflower seeds, dark leafy greens

(*I recommend getting blood levels of ferritin (iron) levels tested if you plan on supplementing with anything other than food.)

ZINC

- Is a co-factor in the production of neurotransmitters, such as dopamine
- Lower levels of zinc are associated with inattention.
- Zinc has an active role in the production of Omega-6 and Omega-3 fatty acids, so low levels of zinc may be the culprit in faulty EFA metabolism in those with ADHD.

Food sources: Organ meat, spinach, grass-fed beef, summer squash, asparagus, pumpkin seeds, Crimini mushrooms

ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS (EFAs)

- Essential for brain health
- DHA improves brain function, decreases brain inflammation, and improves both long and short-term memory.
- EFAs keep cell membranes fluid, allowing nutrients to easily pass into the cell while allowing wastes to exit.

Food sources: Flax seeds, Hemp seed (both are easy to add to smoothies, on top of salads, or on cereals, such as oatmeal), sunflower seeds, walnuts, sesame seeds

VITAMIN D

- Has been found to increase the levels of neurotransmitters in the brain.

Food sources: Egg yolk, grass-fed beef, cod liver oil; dairy

Disclaimer

This guide is for informational purposes only, and is not a comprehensive list. Readers are advised to do their own research and are advised to make decisions in partnership with their health care provider. DO NOT go off any medications you or your child may be on (ADHD or otherwise) without the careful supervision of your physician.



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