

10 FOODS EVERY MAN SHOULD EAT

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What you eat could be sapping your grey matter of its power. Nutritionist Dr Carrie Ruxton tells you how to use food to make your mind sharper

Nutrition



For years, the workings of our brains have been a mystery, but now scientists are unravelling how diet and nutrition impacts our most complex organ. “The brain is made mainly of fat, so it’s not surprising that the balance of dietary fats influences mental performance,” says Dr Tom Gilhooly, of the Centre for Nutritional Studies in Scotland. Your grey matter loves carbs, too, using more than half the glucose we consume each day. Luckily it leaves protein alone, so your muscles can keep growing.

1. CRAB FOR DIRECTIONS

Foods rich in zinc are great for the brain. The European Food Safety Authority recently awarded a cognitive-function medal to zinc. The mineral has been found to support the hippocampus, the part of the brain that helps us to remember where we are going and why. A portion of crab has half of your RDA of zinc. Now where were you going? Ah yes! The beach, for some crab . . .

2. SOY FOR MEMORY

Memory could be boosted by a nutrient found in soy, which mimics oestrogen. This is clearly why women have a knack of remembering any minor indiscretion. A study in the British Journal of Nutrition found men who took soy isoflavone pills for six weeks significantly improved their memory. Drink soy milk and never forget another anniversary.



3. SARDINES FOR MOOD

Eating omega 3s for mental function is a no-brainer, but now another fishy nutrient, selenium, has been found to benefit your mental wellbeing. A UK study published in the journal Biological Psychiatry showed that taking a daily supplement of 100 micrograms significantly improved mood and reduced anxiety. And as we know, a happier brain is a more productive one. Sardines are an excellent food source of selenium, supplying a tightly packed 80 per cent of this amount in one tin.

4. BERRIES FOR LONGEVITY

Treat your grey cells to one of nature's finest antioxidants, vitamin C. According to a report in the Journal of the American Medical Association, men with a high intake of antioxidant-rich fruits are less likely to lose their mental faculties as they age. So chuck a handful of blueberries or strawberries on your breakfast cereal.



5. TEA FOR MENTAL AGILITY

Your morning cuppa does more than just lift the spirits, thanks to the flavonoids and L-theanine found in tea. A study of more than 2000 Norwegians by the University of Oslo found mental performance was superior in those who drank the most tea. "The best effects were seen when four cups a day were consumed," says the UK-based Tea Advisory Panel. Now you can tell your boss your tea break is a performance booster.



6. RED MEAT FOR INTELLIGENCE

Red meat is the jackpot source of iron – associated with optimal IQ. A study at Assiut University Hospital in Egypt found the IQs of young men with iron deficiency increased when they started eating more iron. The RDA for men is eight milligrams. If you're an offal man (or even if you're a nice one!) 100 grams of liver or kidney will see you hit this. Prefer beef? A 300g steak will do the trick.

7. GRAPE JUICE FOR RECALLING LISTS

If your desk is covered in Post-Its, swig a glass of grape juice. A study presented at the International Conference on Polyphenols and Health showed that the ability to remember items on lists improved after 12 weeks of drinking grape juice. "Short-term memory was also boosted," says lead researcher Dr Robert Krikorian. Sadly the same can't always be said when grape juice's more alcoholic cousin is consumed too heartily.



8. BROCCOLI FOR ANXIETY RELIEF

Folate isn't just for girls. Poor intake of this vitamin has been linked with apathy, irritability and anxiety (and you thought it was just your job). A study published in the journal *Public Health Nutrition* showed that low folate levels in the blood were associated with negative mood swings. Shift the blues with a large helping of broccoli or peas . . . oh, go on, have that 300g steak with them as well, if you must.



9. EGGS FOR HEALTHY CELLS

We knew it strengthened bones, but now vitamin D is thought to be essential for a healthy mind. A review by the UK's Health Supplements Information Service reported that mental decline was twice as likely in adults with low levels of vitamin D. Eggs are a rich source, as is oily fish – a smart excuse to soft-boil some quail eggs with smoked salmon for a gourmet breakfast.

10. OATS FOR MENTAL FOCUS

Fast carbs may be great for refuelling muscles, but low-GI foods (slow-digesting carbs) are best for mental focus. Swedish scientists at Lund University evaluated memory and attention in 40 volunteers after two different breakfasts. The best results were seen after the low-GI breakfast, because blood-glucose levels were maintained for longer between meals. So get your oats for an altogether cleverer day.