

10

**SUPERFOODS FOR
OPTIMAL BRAIN HEALTH
& PERFORMANCE**



Introduction

We all have brief lapses now and then when our brains start acting weird. You're probably familiar with these common scenarios: you're in the middle of a conversation when suddenly, you just can't remember a familiar name or place, or you can't remember what you were going to say; your mind goes totally blank. You walk into a room and can't recall what you went there to do or fetch.

Likewise, we all have days of mental fatigue and brain fog where we misplace things, find it impossible to focus, and feel irritable and grumpy.

When this happens, we typically shrug it off. We joke about how we're getting senile or that the pressures of the rat race have fried our brains. It's normal for our brains to get tired occasionally, and it's okay to joke about it - if it's infrequent.

But when memory lapses, mood swings, and brain fog start recurring more often, something's not right. It's vital to understand that when certain symptoms become a pattern, they're warning signs of degenerating brain health.

Your brain health literally impacts everything you do, from having clarity and purpose to making decisions to how you express your emotions and communicate with others.

It, therefore, follows that boosting and maintain your brain health will allow you to function at your peak. So, what is involved in boosting brain health? Dozens of complicated exercises and strategies, drastic lifestyle changes and weird gadgets? No!

The great news is that it's surprisingly simple. You can start by eating your way to super brain health and optimal performance!

This book will present 10 powerful 'brain foods' known for their ability to boost and maintain brain health. All you have to do is make sure you eat as many of them as you can on a regular basis. Read on to find out what they are and how they work.

Chapter 1: Signs of Poor Brain Health

First, it's helpful to assess where you stand on the brain health scale. You may be surprised to realize that you're higher up or lower down than you thought. If you're on the high end, the 10 superfoods will skyrocket your brain health even more. If you're on the low end of the scale, eating superfoods will quickly boost and improve many vital brain functions and get you on the road to optimal brain performance.



Here are the common warning signs of poor brain health:

- **General fatigue**

This is when you experience low energy levels, listlessness, and fatigue. These may sometimes be accompanied by mild aches and pain. In a nutshell, a tired body is a sign of a tired mind.

- **Poor resilience**

You get easily frustrated when something takes too long or doesn't go according to plan. You often get the urge to throw in the towel halfway through a task - and sometimes, actually do.

- **Poor sleep**

The first sign of an overstressed brain is poor sleep patterns. Restless sleep, frequent waking during the night, and insomnia all signal that your brain is having trouble winding down.

- **Lack of interest and motivation**

When your brain is in poor health, it struggles to stay stimulated and excited. The result is that you lose interest in many things in your life. Your motivation will also suffer, affecting your productivity.

- **Food cravings**

Frequent food cravings and overeating are also related to a decline in brain health. The buildup of stress and turmoil in your brain is sometimes overwhelming. The 'reward' area of your brain, therefore, triggers you to eat in order to numb the inner turmoil with food.

- **Brain fog**

Your thinking becomes hazy, you have trouble focusing, and experience feelings of aimlessness and confusion.

- **Mood swings**

Emotional outbursts, irritability, and unexplained mood swings signal a brain that's over-tense and overstressed and therefore, unable to express emotions in a healthy manner.

- **Memory lapses**

Frequent forgetfulness means your brain is just too tired and unable to properly process and retain information. Memory lapses include forgetting where you put things, forgetting names and events, and not remembering instructions.

- **Burnout**

This takes the form of an energy crash, usually in the early afternoon. You experience a sharp decline in physical energy and brainpower and struggle to make it to the end of the day.

- **Low sex drive**

Poor brain health causes a loss of general interest and motivation, and this includes an interest in sex.

- **Anxiety**

An overstressed brain has trouble winding down and being calm. Hence, your thoughts are constantly racing about anything and everything. This breeds fear, worry and anxiety.

- **Depression**

Tension, lack of motivation and constant mood swings all lead to feelings of depression, hopelessness, and despondency, which can become serious if not addressed.

The bottom line: The more of these signs you experience and the more often they occur, the more your brain needs attention and care. Start by adding superfoods to your diet.

Chapter 2: What are Superfoods?

So, why are they called superfoods and what makes them special? More importantly, are they more fad than fact? Here are the basic facts about superfoods:

- Superfoods get their name from their super-high nutrient content.
- They're mostly plant-based but some, like dairy products, eggs and fish also pack a high nutritional punch.
- The American Health Association and other health bodies have not officially classified superfoods as independent food groups like carbohydrates, proteins, vegetables, and fruits. This does not mean, however, that they're unrecognized for their powerful health benefits.
- Most plant-based superfoods contain deep colors which point to their dense nutrient content. Blueberries, dark cherries, leafy greens, and eggplant are some examples. The deeper the color of a fruit or vegetable, the more likely it is to be a superfood.
- Perhaps the most common trait shared by the majority of superfoods is their high antioxidant content and hence, their potent cancer-fighting properties.
- Since superfoods aren't classified as a single food group, comprehensive research is impossible. However, a volume of studies done on specific superfoods conclusively proves their health-promoting benefits when eaten on a regular basis.

- While superfoods don't have the capacity to heal disease, they may prevent many diseases as well as alleviate the symptoms of some conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and gastrointestinal issues.
- There are specific superfoods that boost certain body functions such as sleep, immunity, heart health, and longevity. For example, bananas and dairy foods promote calmness and better sleep. Citrus fruits, apples, and leafy greens are known to boost immunity. Garlic is a natural antiseptic that helps fight colds and inflammation, and so on. And of course, there are specific superfoods that boost brain function and promote better brain health.

The bottom line: Superfoods are not a miracle health cure. However, a wealth of research tells us that certain foods can lead to some amazing health transformations when eaten on a regular basis.

Now, let's see what brain foods you should be eating more of to help your brain function at its very best.

Chapter 3:10 Brain Foods you Should be Eating More of

The following 10 superfoods will up your brainpower in various ways. If possible, do try to include a variety of them in your daily diet to give your brain the full spectrum of their nutritional benefits.

Note: This is a no-brainer but, for optimal results, incorporate brain foods into a healthy, balanced diet. It makes no sense to have a healthy meal containing two or three brain foods – then blow it all by indulging in a massive sugar binge (sugar is literally like feeding your brain with poison). So, do take care that you are giving the brain foods a chance to really work.

1. Green leafy vegetables

Research suggests that leafy greens not only boost overall cognitive function but can also protect you against cognitive disease and brain deterioration.

A study conducted in 2018 identified a number of important brain nutrients that leafy greens are dense with. These are vitamin K, folate, beta-carotene, lutein, and Kaempferol, all of which boost cognitive function.

The study also found that people who consumed one portion (1 cup raw, 1/2 a cup cooked) of leafy greens showed improvement in their cognitive function.

Eating plenty of leafy greens helps your brain stay young and sharp while boosting clarity, focus and learning. Leafy greens are also the best brain food for maintaining long-term cognitive health and preventing memory loss, Alzheimer's, and dementia in later years.

Something to note is that the darker the color, the more nutritionally high leafy greens are. These include:

- Kale
- Spinach
- Collard greens
- Arugula
- Lettuce
- Cabbage
- Beet greens
- Swiss chard

No food is more versatile than these brain health boosters. They can be steamed and eaten on their own or combined raw in salads with tasty dressings. Many of them can also be blended into sauces and baked with fish and poultry.

Cool tip: A leafy green smoothie is a great way to supercharge your brain. And let's face it, spinach, kale, collards, and cabbage aren't all-time favorites, are they? But when you combine a handful with a bunch of fresh fruit and blend, you'll never notice!

You can also combine one or two leafy greens in your blender, add the juice of a lemon or an orange for a tart or sweet flavor, and enjoy.

Smoothies are fun to play around with, so experiment by adding various fruits or veggies to the leafy greens and enjoy a nice, tall glass of brain health!

2. Fatty fish

This is possibly the top superfood associated with two things: brain health and heart health. Fatty fish is packed with Omega-3 fatty acids which are healthy, non-saturated fats; the more you eat of them, the better for your health!

Studies have linked fatty fish to lower levels of the protein beta-amyloid. This protein forms brain clots in patients with Alzheimer's disease and high levels in the blood could put you at risk of Alzheimer's and other cognitive diseases.

When fish becomes a regular part of your diet, you will notice the improvement very quickly. Super-clear thinking, razor-sharp memory, improved focus, and better learning retention are just some of the changes you can expect.

The healthiest types of fatty fish to consider are:

- Wild tuna
- Wild salmon

- Herring
- Sardines
- Fish roe
- Mackerel
- Anchovies

Ideally, you should eat fish twice a week and as you can see from the choices above, there's a nice variety to choose from. The bonus is that fish is light on the stomach, low in calories and simply delicious!

Note: If you dislike fish, not to worry. Simply consider taking a fish oil supplements to get the same brain health benefits.

3. Bone broth

Bone broth is an ancient remedy that was known centuries before the term 'superfoods' was invented. It was likely a food that your grandmother and great-grandmother commonly prepared at home. Sadly, its benefits are widely overlooked today.

Historically, bone broth was used as a remedy for gut issues. And the best road to a healthy brain is a healthy gut. Bone broth is prescribed by many doctors as a remedy for leaky gut and other intestinal issues.

Bone broth is packed with collagen, which helps fight inflammation and improve memory. It's also high in proline, glycine and other amino acids

that have potent healing properties and boost the immune system. A strong immune system means better overall brain function.

Bone broth is surprisingly easy to make at home. Here are the recommended steps:

- Place 1 lb. of chicken or beef bones into a large stew pot or slow cooker.
- Add enough water to cover the bones.
- Add a whole peeled onion to the water for flavor.
- Add a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar, which helps pull out the healing nutrients from the bones.
- Bring to a boil then simmer until the water is reduced and you have a golden-colored broth then season with salt and pepper.

You can enjoy the bone broth on its own with a few drops of lemon juice for a delicious soup starter. You can also add an assortment of your favorite veggies for a hearty and filling soup.

4. Blueberries

Never judge a food by its size! Blueberries may be tiny and insignificant looking but they're huge when it comes to their nutritional benefits. In fact, all berries are nutrient-dense but blueberries are the most potent for boosting brain health.

Blueberries are packed with flavonoids, a pigment that gives them their deep blue-violet color. But flavonoids also play an important role in promoting brainpower. They boost memory and prevent memory decline

and brain aging. This isn't surprising when we consider that blueberries also fall into the anti-aging category of superfoods.

A research study found that women who ate moderate portions of blueberries and strawberries on a daily decreased the onset of memory decline by 2½ years.

Overall, blueberries promote the health of brain cells, boost concentration and prevent age-related memory and cognitive decline. They also promote mental health by balancing and improving the mood.

You should have no trouble eating this delicious fruit on a regular if not daily basis. Fresh, canned, or frozen, they make a delicious addition to any meal. A handful of fresh blueberries on your morning cereal is a great way to perk up your brain and keep it energized throughout the day.

5. Celery

This infamously-termed 'rabbit food' is not an all-time favorite, possibly because it's negatively associated with dieting – and deprivation!

But celery is one superfood that you don't want to ignore as it's closely related to brain health.

Celery may be low in calories (16 per cup) but it's super-high in nutrient content. These include polysaccharides and antioxidants that fight free radicals and reduce inflammation. Celery is also a powerhouse of essential vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients.

But how does celery specifically promote brain health? First and foremost, the antioxidants contained in celery fight harmful free radicals in the brain and protect it from oxidative stress which is one of the major causes of brain fog and memory lapses.

Secondly, it contains another antioxidant called lutein, which increases blood flow to the brain and protects it against inflammation. In addition, research suggests that lutein can also protect the brain against degenerative cognitive diseases.

A Chinese study conducted in 2018 suggests that lutein can protect brain neurons by fighting inflammation and promoting the regeneration of healthy brain cells.

Other compounds found in celery such as chlorophyll also help improve blood flow to the brain, meaning a better supply of oxygen. Another antioxidant also fights the buildup of plaque in the blood vessels of the brain, further promoting better blood flow and more efficiency.

A good, steady supply of oxygen is essential for proper brain function, in addition to focus and clarity on a daily basis.

Finally, celery improves and balances the mood, which means less stress for your brain.

The most popular way to eat celery is of course raw, cut into sticks, with your favorite cheese or yogurt dip. But there are many other ways to incorporate celery into your diet so that you're eating as much of it as you can.

Celery is delicious when stir-fried or sautéed with other vegetables or added to stuffing and sauces. Plus, the low-calorie content gives you no excuse not to be eating celery in one form or another every day!

6. Tea & coffee

If you just can't function without your morning mug of coffee or afternoon cup of tea, good for you! Make sure you never miss them. You're doing your brain a huge favor by consuming these two super-beverages every day.

The caffeine content in coffee and tea does much more than giving your brain a quick perk and rechargers your mental batteries. Consuming caffeine can provide your brain with several long-term benefits as many studies have found.

A 2014 study published in the Journal of Nutrition found that caffeine promotes better brain function. Participants who consumed prescribed amounts of caffeine were found to perform better on mental aptitude tests and have stronger cognitive skills.

In another study, researchers at Johns Hopkins University found evidence suggesting that caffeine can also strengthen the ability to retain information and form strong memories.

In the study, some participants were given caffeine tablets while others were asked to take a placebo. The participants were then asked to study and memorize a series of images. The participants who had consumed

caffeine were better able to recognize the images they had memorized on the following day.

So, enjoy a fragrant cup of coffee or freshly brewed tea once or twice a day to get the full benefits of these tasty beverages. They'll keep your brain sharp and strong during the day while boosting and maintaining your cognitive function long-term.

Note: As with everything, moderation is the secret word. If you're a hardcore coffee or tea drinker who consumes cup after cup throughout the day, you'll be doing your brain health more harm than good.

More is not better in this case. The constant flow of caffeine to your brain will keep it overstimulated and tense, raising your stress levels.

Ultimately, you'll start experiencing energy crashes and brain fog rather than a clear, focused mind. Try to limit your consumption to two cups a day, three at most.

7. Broccoli

Along with cauliflower and spinach, broccoli is probably the least-liked vegetable on the planet. It brings back memories of Mom's ultimatum, "No dessert unless you eat your broccoli!" But the benefits of broccoli as a brain food are too amazing to be ignored.

Broccoli is high in two powerful brain nutrients - choline and vitamin K. They promote super focus and mental clarity. In fact, very soon after you

start eating broccoli twice or three times a week, you'll notice that your mind is much sharper and alert. You'll find that it's much easier to make decisions and organize your thoughts, as well as enjoy a longer attention span.

Broccoli is also packed with vitamin C and fiber, both of which boost immunity, thereby keeping your brain stress-free.

If you're one of the rare people who like broccoli, eating more of it regularly won't be a chore. But if broccoli is a detested vegetable on your food list, you can learn to love it.

There are hundreds of mouthwatering - yes, mouthwatering - recipes online that can turn you into a broccoli lover overnight. From creamy soups to herb-drenched stir-fries and salads, you'll easily change your mind about broccoli.

8. Whole grains

Like every other organ in your body, your brain needs energy in order to function. Glucose is the body's main fuel for producing that energy.

The carbohydrates found in grains are a main source of brain/body energy but not all carbs are created equal. When it comes to charging up your brain the healthy way, whole grains are the way to go.

Refined grains like white bread, white flour, pasta, and white rice wreak havoc on your brain due to their high glycemic index. The glycemic index is used to measure the rate at which certain foods raise blood sugar levels.

Refined grains quickly spike blood sugar levels, giving the brain a big energy surge that quickly wears off, leaving your brain hungry for more energy. This yo-yo effect causes mental exhaustion and brain fog and impairs normal brain function.

Whole grains are exactly the opposite. Because they are low on the glycemic index, they slowly supply your brain with a steady flow of energy and keep your blood sugar levels balanced and stable.

Your brain stays sharp and focused throughout the day whereas on a long-term basis, remains healthy and strong.

With more and more people becoming aware of the health benefits of whole grains, they're more accessible than ever before. Today, your average supermarket stocks a wide variety of whole-grain products including bread, flour, pasta, brown rice, and even baked goods like muffins and crackers.

The best thing you can do for your brain health is to make the switch to whole grains. With so many alternatives available, making the change is super simple. The difference in taste is negligible while the brain health benefits are massive. In fact, some whole grains like wild rice, are more delicious than white rice.

9. Turmeric

Although technically a spice, turmeric is well worthy of holding a top rank on the superfoods list. Its benefits to brain and neurological health should make it a top priority addition to any diet.

Healthy brain cells and neurons can deteriorate and become damaged over time with continued stress and overstimulation of the brain. Turmeric can aid in the healing and regeneration of brain cells and help maintain brain balance.

Widely known for its health benefits in Eastern cultures, turmeric has been used in cooking for centuries. It's a natural anti-inflammatory and antibacterial as well as a potent cancer-fighter.

But perhaps the most remarkable thing about turmeric is that its powerful compounds have the ability to cross the blood-brain barrier. These nutrients move directly into the brain to promote healing and boost cognitive function.

Research on the brain health effects of turmeric is ongoing. However, available studies strongly suggest that it can prevent and even heal certain brain disorders such as Alzheimer's, dementia, and memory loss.

It helps alleviate anxiety and depression and balances the mood. Turmeric also has the amazing ability to repair damaged brain cells.

But the most important reason why turmeric is called a miracle spice is its ability to promote the production of stem cells in the brain and keep them healthy. With a large and healthy population of stem cells, your brain function will be nothing less than optimal.

This aromatic spice can be used daily in almost any dish. It adds a delicious flavor to meat, poultry, and fish. It gives rice an appetizing color and tasty flavor and works very well as a seasoning for vegetables and sauces.

The benefits of this deep yellow miracle spice should be all the motivation you need to consume it on a daily basis.

10. Walnuts

All nuts can be considered superfoods but walnuts are particularly powerful brain food.

Walnuts are a great source of healthy fats and proteins but they are also high in an Omega-3 fatty acid called alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), which boosts memory. A study conducted at UCLA in 2014 found that participants who regularly consumed walnuts consistently had higher scores on cognitive tests.

Walnuts also lower blood pressure and help keep arteries and blood vessels clear. This means a better flow of blood and oxygen to the brain. They're also packed with antioxidants, vitamins and minerals and help boost alertness and clarity. while their dense vitamin E content can protect you from Alzheimer's disease.

A handful of walnuts every day can bring you all these amazing brain benefits and ensure that your brain gets healthy and stays healthy.

Eat them on their own as a filling snack or sprinkle them on salads and dessert to add that extra punch to your brain-healthy diet.

Conclusion

So, can superfoods really improve your brain health? The answer is a resounding yes! This fact is firmly supported by a wealth of scientific data. The few studies mentioned here are just a drop in the bucket.

If you're still skeptical, you can easily put your doubts to rest by simply eating the 10 superfoods discussed in this book.

Make them a regular part of your diet and eat them as often as you can. Many of them will take effect very quickly, and you'll experience their impact first-hand. Superfoods are anything but hype!

Today, there's much more awareness about brain health. We understand that our brains require specific nutrients just like our bones, teeth, and other organs. Just as we eat specific foods to boost immunity or have stronger bones, eating superfoods will give us stronger brains.

Remember, eating well is vital for your overall health. Be sure you don't sabotage the effects of these superfoods by adding them to an otherwise unhealthy diet. Eat well-balanced meals, exercise regularly and you may well be surprised at the transformation.

A healthy, sharp brain impacts everything we do. When it's performing at its peak, you'll perform at your peak. All it takes is the addition of superfoods into your diet.

So, eat your way to a robust, peak-performing brain. Keep your brain young and it'll keep you young for the rest of your life!