



Top 12 Power Foods to Fuel the Brain

By Kelly Aiello RHN

Introduction

You insure your car, your home, your boat, and even expensive pieces of jewelry. But have you ever considered taking proactive steps to care for your brain? By providing it with the right nutrients, you can ensure your most valuable asset will remain in optimal working order. For many, it can even improve! That's right, by treating your brain right, you can get even more out of it that you thought possible!

Protecting and nourishing your brain is even more important if you have sustained a brain injury or are starting to see a decline in brain energy and function.

There are many foods that fuel the brain and should be eaten in abundance to support optimal cognitive performance.

These are my top 12 power foods to fuel the brain.

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#1 Wild (Alaskan) Salmon

Wild Alaskan Salmon is the number 1 food in which to feed your brain. Packed with omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, micronutrients, and micro-minerals, wild salmon can improve memory, increase focus, and banish brain fog. One word of caution: stick to wild-caught Alaskan salmon, as farmed and regular wild-caught salmon can be loaded with heavy metals, toxins, and environmental contaminants.



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#2 Avocados

Avocados are one of the healthiest foods you can eat. The healthy fats found in avocados help keep blood sugar levels stable and provide your brain with powerful nutrients. They are packed with vitamin K and folate, which help prevent blood clots in the brain as they improve memory and concentration. Avocados also contain vitamin C and and B vitamins which need to be replenished daily, as they are used up quickly, especially when stressed.



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#3 Coconut oil

Coconut oil is excellent brain food! As an anti-inflammatory, it can reduce inflammation in the brain. This is especially important if you've suffered a brain injury. It also helps with memory loss as you age, and has the added benefits of destroying harmful bacteria in the gut.



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#4 Blueberries

Blueberries, or “brain berries” as I like to call them, are packed with antioxidants, vitamin C, vitamin K, and fibre. They help protect our brains from inflammation, oxidative damage, and deterioration. Studies also show that blueberries increase life-span, slow age-related cognitive decline, and improve cardiovascular function! So do yourself a favour and eat some today! Fresh or frozen, be sure to get in your daily dose of nature’s candy!



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#5 Broccoli

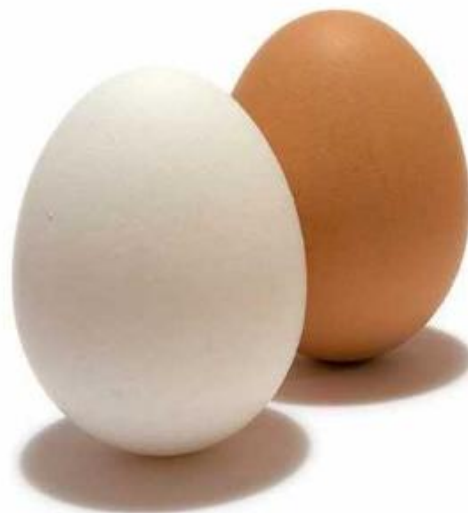
Broccoli is a source of two nutrients that are crucial for improving brain function - vitamin K and choline. The high levels of vitamin K can strengthen cognitive performance while choline works to sharpen your memory. Broccoli is also loaded with vital antioxidants, and fibre.



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#6 Organic Eggs

Organic, free-range eggs from hens that have been allowed to eat grass and roam where they want, contain large amounts of choline and twice as many omega 3 fatty acids as GMO eggs. Choline is important for brain health, vital for fetal brain development, and can also increase your mood. And no need to be concerned about cholesterol, because studies show that eating whole eggs has no effect on cholesterol levels of healthy adults. In fact, they may even help raise good cholesterol levels.



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#7 Beets

Beets are a delicious root vegetable that can reduce inflammation, and help rid your blood of toxins. They are high in antioxidants, and the natural nitrates in beets can actually increase blood flow to the brain, which can improve cognitive performance.



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#8 Green Leafy Vegetables

Green Leafy Vegetables like spinach, kale, Swiss chard, and Romaine lettuce are loaded with vitamins A and K, which can help fight inflammation, keep bones strong, and stave off dementia - all great reasons to eat your greens!



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#9 Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Extra Virgin Olive Oil has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant-rich polyphenols. A little drizzle on your salad can improve learning and memory while reversing age-related cognitive decline. Extra virgin olive oil also helps break down neurotoxins that induce Alzheimer's disease. One word of caution: Olive oil is quite fragile and can be easily damaged by light, oxygen, and heat. For these reasons, treat it with care and only use it to drizzle on top of already-cooked food or salads, and never heat it past medium.



#10 Almonds

Almonds contain antioxidants, healthy fats, fibre and magnesium that work to boost alertness and preserve memory. They're capable of increasing brain capacity, intellectual ability and longevity, while reducing that dreaded inflammation.



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#11 Dark Chocolate

Dark Chocolate and pure cocoa powder contain a few compounds that can boost your mood and your brain power. These include caffeine, flavonoids, and antioxidants that work to help improve memory and learning while slowing age-related cognitive decline. Stick to 85% chocolate or darker if at all possible to maximize brain benefits and ensure the least amount of sugar has been added.



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#12 Coffee

Coffee, yes I said coffee, is actually good for your brain! The caffeine and antioxidants contained within a cup of java has several different positive effects on brain health. The caffeine can increase alertness and improve your mood by boosting levels of serotonin - the 'feel-good' neurotransmitter. The antioxidants it contains can improve concentration and reduce your risk of neurological diseases including Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.



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Conclusion

In general, the best brain foods are rich in antioxidants, healthy fats, vitamins and minerals. They provide energy, help protect against brain-related diseases, and help nourish the mind.

Most of the best brain foods are also healthy omega-3 fatty acids. Why? Your brain is made of about 60% fat, so feeding it with the right kinds of fat keeps it full, active, and provides fuel that can help it run optimally.

In summary, by reducing inflammation and oxidative stress in the brain while restoring energy production, our most valuable asset will be well-cared for and pay us back continually for years to come. Neuronutrition can also be used if you want to take measures now to prevent cognitive decline associated with aging, or simply want to improve mental focus, cognition, and personal productivity. Whatever your motivation, feeding your brain can nourish your mind.



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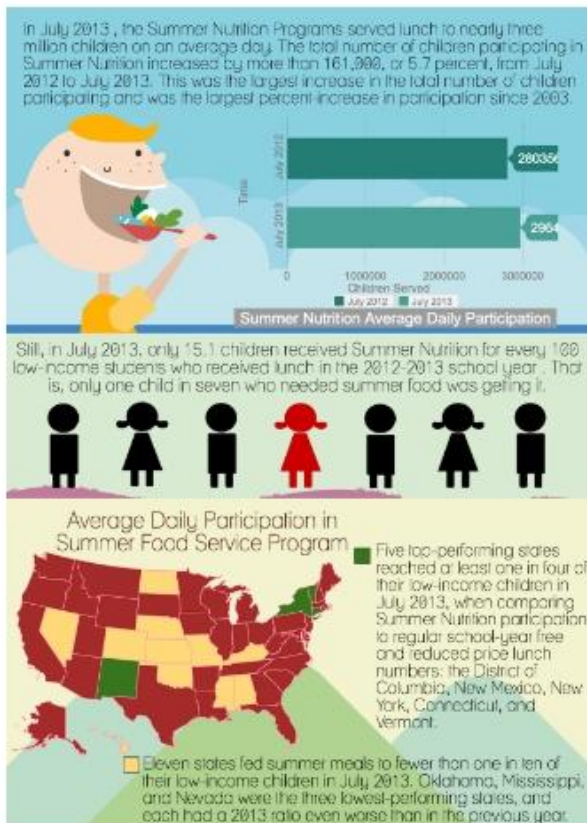
Why work with me



Why Work With Kelly?

My life did not begin as that of a nutritionist - quite the opposite, actually. I grew up eating a predominantly Standard American Diet rich in refined carbohydrates, loaded with white sugar, additives, and preservatives. As a result, I was overweight and chronically unwell, catching anything and everything that was going around. As my mom and sister suffered the same weight problems as I did, we often went on diets together, trying pretty much anything out there. Of course it was no surprise that we would starve and be miserable until we finally caved and realized the current diet-of-the-month wasn't working or in our best interests at the time. Thus, yo-yo dieting became the norm and continued when I became an adult and moved away from home.

What also continued were the compounding health problems I experienced, including back pain, osteoarthritis, sinus infections, and thyroid issues. I thought this was normal for everyone and just a natural byproduct of getting older. But then again, I had also thought it was normal for all young women to grow up trying every type of diet out there only to gain back any weight lost in no time. We tried to follow the recommended food pyramid at the time - predominantly low fat and high carb, but had no idea at the time that we were actually starving our bodies!



Why Work With Me

But diets continued, life moved on, and illnesses continued to ravage my body. I didn't know where else to turn.

In the late 90's, I relocated to Ottawa, Ontario for my first teaching job, and soon met Joe - the love of my life and man I eventually married. We were each other's best friends and quickly became inseparable. Life was always busy for us - both perpetually tired, overworked and stressed to the max. Between busy careers, we also managed two major moves; first to Portland, Oregon then to Kamloops, BC.

Then life as I knew it came to stop when Joe was hit by a car while cycling and was launched through the air. The traumatic brain injury he suffered returned him home to me a different man. After months of rehab and trying many different pharmaceuticals, most only making matters worse, we bravely decided to take the bull by the horns and figure things out ourselves, starting with a change in diet.

The discovery that the brain prefers fat for fuel over carbs shifted our entire focus on food and led to him adopting a ketogenic eating style. Though he still has his struggles, with the help of meditation, mindfulness practices, and the right foods for him, Joe is better able to manage his symptoms and chronic pain.

And for me? After switching to a predominantly Paleo approach, I am healthier and thinner than I have ever been in my life. No more yo-yo dieting. No more migraines. No more thyroid medication. Gone are my chronic illnesses and addiction to sugar (which I didn't know I had, let alone knew was possible).

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For decades, not once did it ever occur to me that what I was putting into my body (food, the additives, preservatives and chemicals it contained, birth control pills, and antibiotics) could have been contributing to my health or state of mind, or that a few of the right changes could be the solution. I had no idea what it felt like to experience genuine health. Now that I have, I cannot imagine ever going back!

This discovery for me was so profound, I knew I had to share my knowledge with the world and empower others so they could experience a richer sense of health and well being just like I did. So, I returned to school and became a natural nutritionist.

Continually inspired by the power of real food and its amazing impact on health, I blog about relevant topics related to health and nutrition, and spend a lot of time in the kitchen trying new recipes to share. All recipes I post are whole food-based, gluten-free and refined sugar-free. That means you can feel confident in making them for you and your family, knowing they full of natural, nutrient-dense healthy foods.

My ultimate goal is to educate, empower and inspire you to take an active role in your health and start living the life you always dreamed of. I'm here to tell you that it is possible!

I offer one-on-one nutritional counselling, small group coaching programs, and meal planning services to help you create a life-long habit of choosing healthy food. I also offer educational services including workshops, speaking engagements and cooking classes for families, the community, and progressive corporations.

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