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7 Tips to Boost Your Brain Power

Looking for some strategies to improve your intellect, stay healthy and boost your longevity? By following these powerful tips, you can improve your mental health, and in the long run, even boost your “mental smarts”.

1. Keep Active – Exercise, Music and Mental Challenges

Exercise

We have all heard about the importance of exercise to keep your body running at an optimal level. But did you know that exercise actually causes your brain nerve cells in your to multiply? Exercise also supports brain-derived neurotrophic factors (BDNF) that release chemicals in your body to promote neural health - improving cognitive functions, such as learning.

A study published in 2010 by Neurosciencelooked at the effects of exercise on primates to understand how exercise impacts the brain. Monkeys involved in regular exercise not only experienced improved blood flow to the brain, but it also helped acquire new tasks twice as quickly as the control group.

High-intensity exercise, strength and weight lifting, stretching, and core work are an integral part of optimizing your workouts to improve your brain health.

Music

The well-known "Mozart Effect," suggests listening to classical music can make you brighter.

Research has highlighted the fact that listening to music while exercising boosted cognitive levels and verbal fluency skills in people. In the case study the fluency skills more than doubled after listening to music compared to those participating in a non-music session.

Mental Challenge

Challenging your brain via learning is one of the best methods to boost your brain function. Key activities like learning a foreign language, playing a musical instrument or being involved in social and community activities can enhance brain elasticity.

Similarly, crossword puzzles, board games, web research can test your brain in ways that watching TV cannot. Turn off the TV and get thinking – your brain will thank you for it.

2. Animal-Based Omega-3 Fats

Docosahexaenoic acid, or DHA, an omega-3 fat, is an essential structural component of both your brain. It helps support nerve cells to improve neurotransmission from cell to cell and within cells.

As I mentioned in an earlier post, non-animal omega 3 and 6 can be found in unrefined organic sunflower, sesame, primrose, oat, rice, and wheat germ oils. For animal based omega 3, consider adding Atlantic salmon, krill oil, herring, and liver to your diet.

Another study found significant changes in verbal fluency scores after taking 800 mg of DHA per day for four months compared with placebo. Furthermore, memory and rate of learning were significantly improved when DHA was combined with 12 mg of lutein per day.

3. Sleep

We've all felt the effects of mental lethargy after missing sleep. It's harder to think clearly and get your body moving. Sleep is powerful in the fact that it not only helps regenerate your physical body, but it is critical for mental insight.

In order to improve your brain's plasticity (the ability to boost learning behaviour and memory), take time to get enough sleep or take a nap to improve your brain power.

4. Coconut Oil

Typically, your brain uses insulin to convert glucose (from food) in your bloodstream into the keep your brain working at an optimal level. However, if there is limited supply, your brain is able to run on ketone bodies or ketoacids to prevent brain atrophy and prevent degenerative neurological diseases.

Ketones are what your body produces when it converts fat (as opposed to glucose) into energy, and a primary source of ketone bodies are the medium chain triglycerides (MCT) found in coconut oil. Over two tablespoons of coconut oil (about 35 ml) would supply you with the equivalent of 20 grams of MCT.

I recommend you start with one teaspoon, taken with food in the mornings. Gradually increase your coconut oil intake every few days until you are able to manage four tablespoons.

5. Vitamin D

Vitamin D can increase nerve growth in your brain, specifically in the hippocampus and cerebellum of the brain, areas that are involved in planning, processing of information, and the formation of new memories.

As I have discussed in an earlier post, sunlight, fortified foods and vitamin D3 supplements can offer the right levels for healthy brain function.

6. Optimize Your Gut Flora

Your gut health and your brain function are unified and co-dependent in a number of different ways. Your gut bacteria are an active and integrated part of your body – so the choices you make can have a significant impact on your body and brain functions.

Eating highly processed and sugary foods can devastate the healthy microflora. Probiotic supplements and foods rich in naturally occurring good bacteria, can restore the balance in your gut and encourage a healthy brain.

7. Vitamin B12

Mental sluggishness and difficulties with memory function are two of the top warning signs that you have vitamin B12 deficiency, and as you age, this is a critical element for your brain health. In fact, a Finnish study found that people who consume foods rich in B12 may reduce their risk of Alzheimer's in their later years.

B12 is available in its natural form in:

- Milk
- Eggs
- Seafood

- Pork
- Chicken

Vitamin B12 supplementation are also available as an under-the-tongue fine mist spray – to make sure you have what it takes to keep your brain healthy and strong.

Regardless of your age, mental function is an essential part of everyday activities. Take the time to keep mentally sharp and choose the right foods- it will make a big difference to your brain and your body.