

Nutrition Times

September 2024 Nutrition Services

Nutrition & Brain Health



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We all know that nutrition supports our overall health, but did you know that it also supports our brain health? Nutrition plays a major role in the development of the brain in children and youth. It also plays an important role of maintaining brain health as we age. Nutrition to support brain health is a timely topic with September being [World Alzheimer's Month](#) and with students heading back to school to learn.

Nutrients to Support Brain Health

Some key nutrients to support brain health include **protein, zinc, iron, choline, folate, iodine, vitamin D, B6, B12** and **omega 3 fatty acids**. Following [Canada's food guide](#) is one of the easiest ways to get the nutrients to support your brain health. The food guide also supports cardiovascular health which supports good blood flow to the brain.

Simple Additions to your Diet

Include **berries** to your diet. Berries are high in antioxidants which protect your brain from oxidative damage.



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Sprinkle fresh blueberries on your morning cereal or [pancakes](#). Enjoy a [yogurt parfait](#) with mixed berries. Make [overnight oats](#) with berries. Add berries to a salad or in a [smoothie](#).

Include more **dark leafy greens** to increase nutrients like folate which plays a role in the production of neurotransmitters and the maintenance of myelin coating of neurons in the brain. Have a [spinach salad with berries](#) or enjoy a [cobb salad](#).



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Eat more **whole grains, legumes, nuts** and **seeds** rich in folate acid, B vitamins and fibre. Higher fibre foods encourage the growth of beneficial bacteria in the gut and may help suppress harmful ones. Newer research is uncovering the role of a healthy gut to supporting the brain. Enjoy a [chicken and bean quesadillas](#), [apple berry crisp](#) or [berry brunch bake](#). Sprinkle nuts on cereal, yogurt, or a salad.

Include fatty fish rich in **omega 3 fatty acids** and **vitamin D** more often. Omega 3 fatty acids play a key role in brain development and brain health across the lifespan. Vitamin D plays a role in neurotransmission. Try some [grilled salmon](#), easy [fish cakes](#) or enjoy sardines on crackers as a snack.



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Back-to-School Fuel for Brain Power

There's a close link to nutrition and learning. A healthy diet helps improve focus, memory, brain function and moods. Include complex carbohydrates like [whole grains](#) and [legumes](#) which supply a steady supply of glucose to support brain function. Fill half of their lunch with [vegetables and fruit](#). Include a [protein](#) choice. Pack a refillable [water](#) bottle and stay hydrated. Watch [here](#) for school lunch tips and visit

AHS [here](#) for ideas for lunches, snacks, drinks, and peanut/nut free choices.

The Mediterranean and MIND Diets both support brain health. Learn more here:

- [The Mediterranean style of eating](#)
- [Brian Health Food Guide](#)
- [Brain-healthy tips to reduce your risk of dementia.](#)

Upcoming Events & Classes

We offer classes on a variety of nutrition topics including:

- Healthy Eating for Pregnancy
- Feeding Babies
- Mealtime Struggles (Picky Eating)
- Preventing or managing chronic disease
- Registration details [here](#).

For a complete list of workshops that are available anywhere in the province click [here](#) including *Easy & Healthy Mediterranean Cooking Online Class* [here](#).

Contact

If you have questions, contact your local Registered Dietitian at Community Health Services:

Medicine Hat	403-502-8200
Brooks	403-501-3300
Lethbridge	403-388-6666

For more information on this or other nutrition topics, go to healthyeatingstartshere.ca



Questions? Email us at publichealthnutrition.southzone@ahs.ca