

Boosting Your Brain with Breakfast

The importance of a healthy breakfast should not be overlooked, especially as we look towards to a school schedule filled with assessments and standardized tests. After a long night spent in sleep, our bodies crave food to help them gear up for activities, both physical and mental. Help your child to get the most out of his/her day by preparing a nutrient rich meal that will make them alert and able!

The nutrient **Choline**, which is found in eggs and nuts, helps with memory. Scrambled eggs with wheat toast are an excellent choice. A hard-boiled egg is easy to carry to school, as are a package of walnuts or almonds.

Antioxidants, such as Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and Vitamin E, boost brain function. Fruits and vegetables contain antioxidants. They are also found in nuts, beans, and legumes. A fruit smoothie, made with favorite flavors such as bananas, blueberries, strawberries, and yogurt, will give you child a good start with antioxidants. Hummus or black bean dip, served with carrots sticks or pita chips, would make a great brain-boosting snack!

Omega 3 Fatty Acids improve cognitive functions. Omega-3 fatty acids can be found in cold-water fatty fish, like salmon and tuna, in nuts (like almonds and walnuts), and in heart-healthy oils (like olive oil).

Whole Grains help improve your memory and provide your body with long-lasting energy. Oatmeal is an excellent source of whole grains. One hundred percent whole wheat bread, whole grain waffles topped with fruits, and whole grain/high fiber cereals are also excellent choices.

Stay mentally alert with **Iron!** Lean meats, spinach, dried fruits, beans, and whole grains are all sources of iron. While you may not want to serve spinach and steak for breakfast, you could make a iron rich trail mix from whole grain cereal, nuts, and dried fruits such as raisins, apricots, and cherries.

Calcium feeds a growing body! Low fat milk products including milk, yogurt, and cheese are all rich in calcium that strengthens bones.

Water keeps the body hydrated which helps concentration. Make sure that your child has a bottle of water available throughout the day. In fact, make water your lunchbox drink of choice. Most “juice boxes” are mainly corn syrup and artificial flavors, and flavored waters usually contain sugar/artificial sweeteners: avoid the sugar!

Avoid highly processed foods with excess sugar and artificial ingredients. Check labels for ingredients like high-fructose corn syrup, sugar, trans fats, and partially hydrogenated oils. Your child may love donuts, but a diet of donuts and sugary drinks will cause a spike in energy followed by a crash. The body processes these foods quickly – which will also leave your child feeling hungry long before lunch. Save these types of foods for an occasional treat.

Help your child be successful by making good choices in the kitchen each morning.