

Food that can help you on your exams

Don't you wish you could take something before an exam or test that would help increase your concentration? Well you're in luck. Recent studies suggest that proper nutrition may improve your concentration and memory, as well as your overall alertness, coordination, and cognitive skills.

The Fabulous Trio

1. Complex Carbohydrates

Whole Wheat products, brown rice, and high fiber foods are all examples of complex carbohydrates. These carbohydrates supply the brain with a steady flow of glucose, the energy source for the brain.

When carbohydrates are consumed, L-tryptophan, an amino acid, has improved entry into the brain. L-tryptophan is used in the brain to make the neurotransmitter serotonin, which promotes relaxation and helps induce sleep.

But be warned, consuming too many carbohydrates can affect performance levels on exams: the person may feel tired. But carbohydrates in the appropriate amount provide energy necessary to perform well cognitively. With the proper balance of complex carbohydrates, a person's brain will have an abundance of energy with few signs of fatigue.

Examples of Complex Carbohydrates:

Whole Wheat Products, Bran, Oatmeal, Quinoa, Vegetables, Brown Rice, High fiber and Wholegrain Cereals, Dried Peas and Beans, Sweet Potatoes



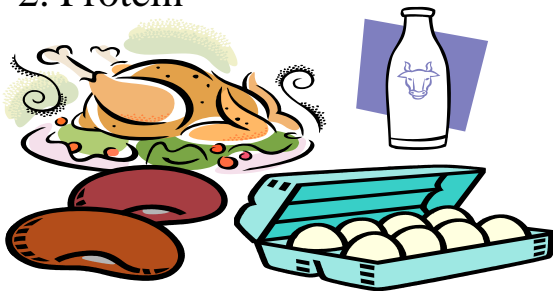
Whole Wheat

Inside Information

A great source of complex carbohydrates, whole grain products come in the forms of bread, whole grain crackers, whole grain cereals and even whole grain pastas.

In addition to complex carbohydrates, Whole Wheat products provide B vitamins, calcium, fiber, and protein.

2. Protein



Lean meats, Skim milk, yogurt, soy, eggs, fish, beans, and nuts are all sources of good protein. Proteins digest more slowly than carbohydrates, so they actually continue to provide energy even when carbohydrate energy is depleted.

When protein is consumed, L-tyrosine, another amino acid, has improved entry into the brain. L-tyrosine is used to synthesize the neurotransmitters norepinephrine and dopamine, both of which are critical to clear, quick thinking; long-term memory; and feelings of alertness and stability.

3. Fat

A must in all diets, fat is an essential nutrient in properly functioning brains. Fat helps us absorb fat soluble vitamins, provides the building blocks for nerve cells, hormones and other structures in the body. Plus, it helps food taste good! The key is selecting fats which contribute to your health. Evidence is mounting in favor of Omega-3 fatty acids, to help feed your brain and make sure it is operating at its highest level. So your grandma was right; some types of fish are great "brain" food. Examples of Healthy fats:

| | | |
|----------------|---------------|------------|
| Nuts and seeds | Peanut Butter | Avocados |
| Fish oils | Olive Oil | Plant Oils |

Sports nutrition tip: proper timing of protein and carbs helps with muscle repair, which helps metabolism.



Let's Combine all this Together - Helpful Advice

1. Stressed Out?? Need to sleep?? Try these!

It is common knowledge that in order to do well on a test, the mind and body must rest. Skillful snacking may help you have improved quality of sleep. Tryptophan is an amino acid which may help with sleep quality. Foods naturally rich in tryptophan are dairy products. Foods low in fat and high in carbohydrate may enhance tryptophan uptake. Moderate amounts—don't eat the whole box of cereal.

Examples of bed time snacks:

Yogurt, cereal with milk, oatmeal with skim milk, plain cookies such as graham crackers, even toast with fruit spread. Don't forget about a glass of milk—excellent source of tryptophan!



A Good Breakfast

Cottage cheese, low fat granola, and fruit

Eggs, Whole Wheat toast, skim milk, water, and fruit

Oatmeal with soy milk, and fruit

Greek yogurt with uncooked oatmeal, fruit

Peanut butter on whole grain English muffin, skim or soymilk, fruit

Soyburger on whole grain English muffin

2. Don't Skip Breakfast

Your body has just been on an 8 hour fast and you need to replenish your fuel supply. This can be solved by eating a breakfast that includes protein and carbohydrates.

The egg, a common ingredient in most breakfasts, is an excellent choice, providing protein and fat. To top it off, whole wheat toast with sliced banana or some other fruit, provides the complex carbohydrates needed to sustain energy levels. By making sure you get the proper balance of proteins, fats, and carbohydrates, you will have the nutrition needed to perform your best on those exams.

3. Snacks for exams or study sessions

Well, surprise: it's all about the right combination of complex carbohydrates, protein, and fat.

Energize your brain and have sustained clarity of thought:

Hummus and whole grain crackers or veggies

Fresh fruit and nuts

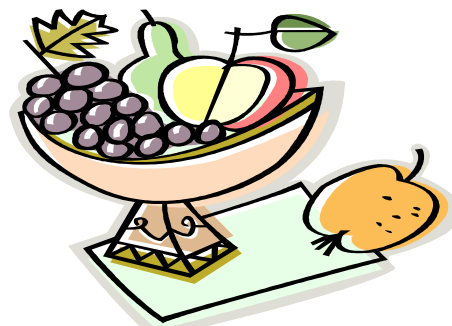
Trail mix

Half of a lean meat or PB sandwich on 100%Whole Grain Bread

Granola type bars with at least 10 grams protein

Cottage cheese and fresh fruit

String cheese and fresh fruit



4. Last bit of Advice

Don't skip a meal. Skipping meal meals can cause irritability, fatigue, and reduced concentration.

Avoid using too many energy products or caffeine. While it's true that a moderate amount of caffeine can help with being sharp mentally, too much can cause jitteriness and anxiety.