



TBH Focus

Body | *Eat Smart*

- Sticking to a healthy diet—and maintaining a healthy weight—are key to a healthy brain. In addition, studies have linked too much body fat, especially in the belly, with an increased risk of dementia.
- Following a diet that's high in brain-healthy foods—especially cold-water fish and other sources of omega 3-fats, and fruits and veggies that are rich in antioxidants—has been associated with a lower risk of dementia. The Mediterranean diet is a great example of this approach to eating.
- Diet matters to everyday performance: Alcohol, caffeine, and sugar can have a short-term impact on focus and memory, so it's important to balance them as we age.

The TBH Science

When it comes to what we eat, it's as important to keep our brain cells in mind as it is our taste buds: There are lots of delicious foods that have the potential to protect us from memory loss and dementia, particularly fish, nuts, and other sources of omega-3 fatty acids, and fruits and veggies that are rich in antioxidants. By putting as many of these on the daily menu as possible we literally can boost our brain health with every bite. Also key: maintaining a healthy weight, sticking to moderate levels of caffeine and alcohol, and, if we have a chronic illness such as diabetes, following a diet designed to help manage it.

There's no reason to limit brain-healthy eating to breakfast, lunch, and dinner, however: Between-meal noshes can be just as neuron-nourishing as the daily three squares—and in fact, they should be: Most of us find that we *need* to reach for an edible pick-me-up at least once or twice a day—typically mid-morning and mid-afternoon, as our blood sugar levels begin to drop after breakfast, and again after lunch. The trouble is, our weapon of choice when faced with a snack attack is often less-than-healthy junk—fast food, vending machine fare, candy left in a bowl on the reception desk.

The smarter way: 1) Treat snacks as mini meals. In fact, many nutrition experts recommend that rather than eating three large meals a day, we have five or six smaller meals at shorter intervals, so that we're less likely to become so hungry that we grab the first thing we see. 2) Plan snacks ahead of time, focusing on foods that may stave off memory loss as well as hunger pangs.

You Will Need

- “Brain Healthy Snack Attack” worksheets (see Resources)
- Samples of brain-healthy snacks, including fresh fruit, dried fruit (sugarless), smoothies, nuts, trail mixes, granola bars, healthy bean dips, dried kale chips (see Resources)
- Ingredients for the “Snack Attack” Exercise (see Resources)
- Small plastic bags for the “Snack Attack” Exercise
- “Total Brain Health Snack Recipes” (see Resources)



- Introduce the activity. Use the TBH Focus and the TBH Science to talk about the brain-health benefits of eating healthfully.
 - Ask questions to get the group thinking about their snack habits and whether their choices may or may not be brain-healthy ones, such as:
 - ♦ “When do you snack?”
 - ♦ “Why do you snack?”
 - ♦ “What are your favorite snacks? Do they seem brain-healthy?”
 - ♦ “What snacks seem appealing that might be more brain-healthy?”
 - Serve samples of brain-healthy snacks.
 - Do the “Snack Attack Exercise” (see Resources).
 - Distribute the “Total Brain Health Snack Recipes” to the group to take home.
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- Introduce the activity. Use the TBH Focus and the TBH Science to talk about the brain-health benefits of eating healthfully.
 - Guide a group discussion about the role that snacking plays in brain health by asking the following questions:
 1. “What are your favorite snacks? Do they seem brain-healthy?”
 2. “What snacks seem appealing that might be more brain-healthy?”
 - Serve samples of brain-healthy snacks.
 - Distribute the “Total Brain Health Snack Recipes” to the group to take home.
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Many delicious foods have the potential to boost brain-health, including nuts, dark chocolate, and dried fruit—all the makings of the quintessential snack: trail mix. Create your own smart trail mix by combining one or two of your favorite nuts, one or two types of dried berries, and dark chocolate chips. Divvy the mix into snack-size plastic bags so that you always have a grab-and-go nosh at the ready.



Expert Opportunity

Invite a nutritionist to talk about healthy snacking.



Resources

See the Resources section of your online Toolkit for all worksheets, links, and additional materials for this activity.