

The Memory Practice

www.thememorypractice.com

Newsletter

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In this issue Dr. Michelon tells you about ...*food and the brain*

At The Memory Practice we develop brain exercises to help adults boost their memory and keep their brain fit.

Our brain exercises are scientifically developed, stimulating and fun.

Discover our Home Program:

- Brain exercises sent directly at home (no computer needed)
- Regular feedback from Dr. Michelon

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The effects of food on brain function

We have all heard about special diets for people with heart problems. But did you know that some foods are also specifically good for brain health?

Guts and the brain

Several gut hormones such as leptin (which sends signals to the brain to reduce appetite), ghrelin (which acts as an appetite stimulant) or insulin (which is secreted by the anticipation of meals and during digestion) have been found to enhance memory formation through their action on the hippocampus.

These hormones have an influence on the plasticity (the ability to change) of connections between neurons in the hippocampus.

Good food for the brain

Several components of diet seem to have an positive effect on brain function.

Omega-3 fatty acids

These acids (e.g., DHA) are normal constituents of cell membranes and are essential for normal brain function.

Fatty acids can be found in fish (salmon), kiwi, walnuts.

In contrast, *trans* or saturated fats have been shown to decrease cognitive performance. These are found in dairy products, meat, and butter.

Flavonoids

These are found in cocoa, green tea, Ginko biloba tree, citrus fruits, wine and dark chocolate.

Folic acid (or folate)

Folate is generated by the liver after the intestine has absorbed vitamin B. It is found in spinach, orange juice and yeast.

Antioxidant foods

The brain is highly susceptible to oxidative damage. Antioxidants are found in a variety of food: Alpha lipoic is found in spinach, broccoli and potatoes; Vitamin E is found in vegetable oils, nuts, green leafy vegetables; Curcumin is found in the curry spice; Vitamin C is found in citrus fruit and several plants and vegetables.

Berries are well known for their antioxidant capacity but it is not clear which of their many components has an effect on cognition.

Caution note

Note that most of the studies showing positive effects of all these nutrients on the brain have been done in the mice! A few human studies are now published but more research is clearly needed to establish and understand the effects of food on brain function.