



How a Healthy Diet Impacts IQ

Many of us know that the food that we eat makes a huge impact on our overall health, but did you know that what you eat can also affect your IQ?

Little Grey Cells

The first important point to consider is that the stress of daily life can impact our cognitive as well as physical health. When our stress hormones rise, we risk impaired cognition, impaired memory, a poorer focus and even (to paraphrase the great Hercule Poirot) the death of the brain's little grey cells.

A great diet offers an extremely powerful restorative role in reversing or preventing this damage. A great diet should, therefore, not only be tasty and healthy, but include the elements needed to lower our stress levels in a way that will protect our most valuable cognitive resources.

Supplements vs. Real Food: Who Wins?

People often debate whether we need vitamin supplements if we receive everything that we need from a healthy diet. We do not need supplements if we are lucky enough to live low-stress lives in areas free of pollution, surrounded by nature (as evolution intended us to), with access to organic, non-chemically enhanced food and fresh water. Sadly that is not the case for most of us! Many supplements, vitamins and minerals can help us to counter the damage caused by modern living excesses (such as pollution and chemically-enhanced foods) in a really efficient, targeted way, so for this reason, many health specialists support their use.



It is ultimately up to the individual to ascertain which approach is right for them, so this resource identifies the main vitamins, minerals and other supplements that play the greatest role in cognitive

and emotional health, indicating that each can be consumed in natural, or supplement, form.¹

Powering up our Brain Chemistry

B-vitamins are a powerful group of vitamins that exert a really positive effect on brain chemistry, including the maximization of dopamine and other 'happy' hormones – a role played similarly effectively by Omega oils. B-vitamins and omega oils, for example, play a decisive role in promoting a better mood, feelings of well-being and happiness. A recent study of EPA (a form of Omega 3) concluded that EPA-rich supplementation led

to participants' brains working 'less hard' whilst achieving greater cognitive performances than before supplementation.

Eating an omega rich diet (almonds, sunflower seeds, fish, flax) appears essential for optimized brain health, with supplements such as Udo's Choice oils offering an optimized blend of



Omega 3, 6 & 9 oils. Vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid) is particularly effective in dealing with the effects of cortisol, a hormone that we release when we are stressed. Great natural sources of B5 include whole grains such as brown rice or oats, sunflower seeds, chickpeas, eggs, milk, avocados, broccoli, potatoes, seafood, beef and poultry.

Giving our Brains a Workout?

L-carnitine (ALC) is a commonly used sports supplement that has also demonstrated significant anti-depressive properties and may offer a valuable role in enhancing cognition, particularly when we are under stress. It can be found abundantly in meat, fish, poultry and milk (generally the redder the meat, the higher the carnitine content). ALC has been shown in scientific studies to improve attention, concentration, memory and in as little as a week.

Counting Sheep

Tryptophan, an amino acid, is found abundantly in high protein foods, and plays a vital role in the creation of a by-product called 5-HTP (5-hydroxytryptophan), which produces feelings of calm, lowers anxiety and enhances sleep quality via the production of serotonin (important as sleep deficits are also correlated with diminished cognitive function). Salmon, poultry, spinach and eggs are just a few great sources of tryptophan.

Can Diets Harm Cognitive Function?

A common mistake of dieters is to radically lower carbohydrate intake, which cuts off the brain's supply of serotonin, pushing them to seek out high carbohydrate foods (e.g. sugary treats or drinks) to quickly replace the diminished serotonin levels. A far more efficient strategy would be to keep carbohydrate intake moderate, alongside high quality protein and healthy fats, and to increase exercise instead.

¹ Always remember to consult your GP or healthcare specialist before using any new supplement, vitamin, mineral or diet.

5-HTP actually plays a significant role in many treatments for depression. Supplements containing tryptophan have been shown to exert positive effects on mild-to-moderate depression.

Another mistake of dieters is to eat too infrequently, which can lead to significant fluctuations in serotonin levels, impairing mental and emotional health. Eating every 3-4 hours is a great, easy way of maintaining blood sugar levels and maintaining healthy serotonin levels.

Natural Chill Pills



Magnesium, often referred to as a natural 'chill pill' possesses powerful anti-depressant properties, partly because it suppresses the release of ACTH (adrenocorticotropic hormone),

which is vital in stimulating the adrenal glands to release cortisol and adrenaline. A relationship between magnesium deficiency and pathological anxiety has been found to exist in clinical trials, contributing to hyper-emotionality in response to a dietary-induced state of hypomagnesaemia (magnesium deficiency). This kind of extreme stress response carries powerfully detrimental cognitive, mental effects, often with severe long-term effects. Incredibly, those severely deficient in magnesium can feel its effects in as little as minutes after supplementation. Foods high in magnesium include a range of green, leafy vegetables, nuts, seeds, seafood and bananas.

A lack of calcium and D3 has also been found to contribute significantly to mood disturbances, with iron deficiency impairing the development of cognition and emotional

Find out More...

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About the Author

Dr. Eles Zehndorfer is the Research Officer for British Mensa. A qualified Personal Trainer and Pilates coach, she earned her PhD from the Institute of Sport & Leisure Policy at Loughborough University in 2006. Dr. Zehndorfer writes regularly on physiology-related matters. She is a Thought Leader for Hartford Funds, one of the world's largest independent investment management firms, and has authored 5 books – 'Leadership: A Critical Introduction' (Routledge, 2014), 'Charismatic Leadership' (Routledge, 2016), 'The Physiology of Emotional & Irrational Investing' (Routledge 2018), 'Evolution, Politics & Charisma: Why do Populists Win?' (2019) and the forthcoming 'Leadership: The Definitive Study Guide' (2020).

Email: elesazehndorfer@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.elesazehndorfer.com>
Elesa Zehndorfer PhD

development (meat and green vegetables offer great iron-rich food sources).

A good daily multi-mineral and multi-vitamin might therefore work wonders for many people as a result! Multivitamins are best taken in the morning as they energise the body, whereas multi-minerals aid sleep and rest so are best taken before bed.

Stress: Hard to Stomach

As the daily stress of life can cause digestive disruption, supplements that assist in gut function are often useful (e.g. probiotics or L-glutamine). As the gut houses 70-80% of the body's entire immune cells, restoring gut function is critical to our overall health. A healthy mind is a healthy body; frequent illnesses place great stress on the body which can severely impact mental, as well as physical, performance.

Enjoy your Coffee

Why is sugary, fatty junk food so bad for our brains as well as our bodies? Partly because recent scientific studies have shown it to be as addictive as cocaine! Junk food plays havoc with our mood and physical health and can even make mental processing more sluggish.



Too much caffeine can be dangerous too, with studies showing that too many cups of coffee can raise stress levels and detrimentally impact emotional and physical health. The good news? A little of it can

actually enhance concentration and mental acuity. So feel free to enjoy a steaming hot cup of coffee to start your day!