

Who Needs Coffee? Try These Foods to Stay Alert

A vital issue when seeking to equalize brain chemistry has to do with a vital tool in the brainpower chest: the eat-right prescription: Are you getting enough of the right fuel to nourish your brain and keep essential chemicals stable?

When you eat food, your digestive system breaks it down into individual nutrients, like glucose and amino acids, to be absorbed into your bloodstream. Once absorbed, specific nutrients cross into the brain to speed the production of mood-enhancing neurotransmitters, such as serotonin. What we eat-or don't eat-can have a profound affect on our mood, appetite and fat-burning capacity.

For example, a raging appetite and slowed metabolic rate are clues to a brain fuel deficit, bringing an almost addictive pull toward certain foods. Your brain may be in need of certain nutrients found in everyday foods to bring peace to the warfare within your mind. Eating, and eating often, is a big part of the solution.

Your brain has only one fuel source: glucose. If deprived of its energy source, the brain functions at a deficit. Not eating is starving the brain, and the resulting drop in blood sugar sends you into "brain alert." This spells bad news for your appetite and your weight: the brain sends out the call to eat, eat too much, and eat the wrong things.

POWER SNACK!

Instead of waiting for that call of the wild, you can call off the alert, and even prevent it, by eating the mini-meals suggested in all of my books. "Power snacking" is also a valuable tool for equalizing brain chemistry because it gives you an immediate supply to meet the demand. Remember the eat-

right prescription: Eat early, eat often, eat balanced, eat lean, eat bright and drink LOTS of water! Overcoming dehydration will improve your blood circulation, which in turn will take your brain's feel-good chemicals throughout your body more efficiently.

GO FOR THE B's!

Consider taking a multi-vitamin that contains at least 150 percent of the RDA for B-complex vitamins and magnesium, which are fuel carriers to nourish the brain and trigger the release of upbeat serotonin.

Power B Foods:

Vitamin B6

Folic Acid

Potato

Chickpeas, cooked (1/2 cup)

Banana

Lima Beans, cooked (1/2 cup)

Whole Grain

Spinach, 1/2 cup cooked

Cereal (1/2 cup)

Orange Juice, 1 cup

Lean Beef (3 oz.)

Strawberries. 1/2 cup

Halibut (3 oz.)

Vitamin B12 (needed: 6 mcg daily)

Atlantic Mackerel, 3 oz.

Beef, 3 0z.

Tuna or Salmon, 3 oz.

Milk, 8 oz.

GO FISH! Ever heard that fish is "brain food"? That's because it's an excellent source of the amino acid tyrosine. This amino acid increases the production of dopamine and norepinephrine, which help the body to buffer the effects of stress and keep "Alertness". Cold-water fishes like salmon,

swordfish, tuna, and mackerel are the best sources.

Putting these recommendations into your daily life will become a very “Smart Thing to do”.

Pamela Smith, RD, is an internationally known nutritionist and energy coach, radio host, culinary consultant, best-selling author, and the creator of *The . Weigh® Strategy* through which thousands of people have won back their health and energy. She provides wellness and menu coaching to professional, corporate and life athletes—from the NBA’s Shaquille O’Neal, Orlando Magic and LA Clippers and the PGA’s Larry Nelson and Brad Faxon, to the executives and culinary development teams at Darden Restaurants, Walt Disney World, Disney Cruise Lines, Hyatt Hotels and Resorts, McDonald’s, Cracker Barrel and Aramark Business Dining.