

## Omicron Omicron Omega Chapter May 2022 Monthly Nutrition Topic

When planning out a healthy diet, it's common to focus on foods geared toward weight loss. While smart caloric intake is vital to overall health, it's also important to understand how food choices affect your brain. By integrating many of the foods on this list into your diet, not only will you see positive results in your waistline, but you'll also improve brain function — and potentially help fight cognitive diseases as well.

### 1. Salmon

While fish, in general, is a healthy choice, salmon is at the top of the list. It's a “fatty” fish, containing high amounts of omega-3 fatty acids, which have been linked to a reduction in mental disorders such as depression. Omega-3s have been shown to boost learning and memory as well.

Salmon also has a naturally high-occurring amount of vitamin D, which is often added to foods and has been linked to lower rates of depression. Other types of fish with high Omega-3 counts include tuna, mackerel, and herring.

### 2. Chicken

Chicken, like turkey, is a delicious lean-protein choice containing the amino acid tryptophan. Though it's often associated with post-Thanksgiving naps, this substance doesn't actually knock you out as urban legends go, but it does help your body produce serotonin — which is vital in helping your brain manage your mood, fight depression and help maintain strong memory.

### 3. Whole Grains

Many types of food fall under this category, like beans, soy, oats and wild rice. While your body and brain utilize carbohydrates for energy, too often we consume simple carbs, which lead to blood sugar spikes. Foods classified as whole grains contain complex carbohydrates, which leads to glucose being produced more slowly, as a more even and consistent source of energy.

Also, whole grains help the brain absorb tryptophan, which means that when eaten in conjunction with foods like chicken and turkey, you can further reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety while boosting brain function.

### 4. Avocados

Avocados are full of vitamin K and folate, which help protect your brain against stroke. They also provide a boost to your memory and concentration.

Avocados serve up a high dose of lutein, too, which studies have linked to improved brain function.

#### 5. Spinach

Spinach and other leafy greens provide your brain with solid amounts of folic acid, which has been shown to be a great deterrent to depression. It also helps fight off insomnia, which is heavily linked to mental impairments and can help reduce dementia in older adults.

#### 6. Yogurt

Yogurt and other products containing active cultures are excellent sources of probiotics. Often associated with digestive health, probiotics have been shown to play a role in reducing stress and anxiety.

Yogurt can also provide you with potassium and magnesium, which helps oxygen reach the brain, further improving its ability to function.

#### 7. Nuts

Like salmon, nuts are an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids, helping to fight depression. Cashews, for example, help provide oxygen to the brain with a dose of magnesium.

Almonds contain a compound called phenylalanine, which is shown to help the brain produce dopamine and other neurotransmitters that boost your mood.

Phenylalanine has also been linked to a reduction in the symptoms of Parkinson's Disease.

#### 8. Olive Oil

Pure, extra virgin olive oil has been quite popular as of late as a part of healthy Mediterranean-style diets. This type of oil contains polyphenols, which help to remove the effects of proteins linked to Alzheimer's Disease. It can also help improve learning and memory.

Be careful when shopping for olive oil, however. Many brands liberally cut their product with vegetable or seed oils, significantly reducing its brain health benefits. Research brands online to find brands tested to ensure they contain pure olive oil.

#### 9. Tomatoes

The source of a tomato's red hue, lycopene is classified as an all-around beneficial phytonutrient. One of the many health boosts it provides is in the fight

against brain disease. It's been shown to delay the onset and progression of Alzheimer's Disease, fighting off cell damage.

In addition, lycopene has been shown to help with memory, attention, logic and concentration.

#### 10. Dark Chocolate

Could this be the best news on the list? Dark chocolate is categorized as such due to its cocoa content, which you won't find in milk chocolate. And the darker the better — 85% cocoa or more is the most beneficial.

Dark chocolate contains high levels of flavonoids, a type of antioxidant. It has been shown to boost attention and memory, enhance mood and help fight cognitive decline in older adults. Just remember, chocolate should still be consumed in moderation.

The next time you go shopping, consider adding one or more of these to your grocery list. In addition to providing general health benefits, you'll be able to provide an outstanding source of nourishment to your brain as well.