

Fruit for Thought

Although they may not cure mental health diseases, certain foods have been shown to help improve and protect the brain and its functions. A study from the journal *Neurological* showed that adding servings of fruit to your diet (1–2 cups daily depending on your age and gender, per USDA recommendations) decreases the risk of stroke by 11%.

But why does fruit play such a vital role in brain health? The study suggests that fruit has a positive effect on blood pressure and high cholesterol. Potassium-rich fruits such as avocados help to reduce the risk of hypertension, which has been linked directly to increased risk of stroke. It should be noted, however, that avocados are fatty fruits and consumption should be kept to one-quarter or one-half of an avocado once a day.

Blueberries are also a good example of brain-healthy fruit, packed full of antioxidants which help to protect the brain from oxidative stress and may reduce the effects of age-related conditions such as Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Citrus fruits, such as lemons and pomegranate juice, provide antioxidant properties as well. But again, be conscious of the amount consumed. Because pomegranates are fairly high in sugar, limit your intake to no more than two ounces a day, diluted with spring water or seltzer.

If you have questions about how much fruit you should include in your diet, or to gain more information on how to keep your brain healthy, MedBen WellLiving suggests consulting your family doctor.



A Cup (or 2) of Fruit a Day Keeps the Doctor Away

Having fruit as part of your daily diet benefits your body as well as your brain.

- Fruits have low energy density (i.e., few calories relative to volume), so combined with reduced-calorie diets, they are good for weight management.
- Currant juice can soothe sore throats and colds.
- Lime oil can stimulate and refresh a tired mind and help with depression.
- Eating an apple is a tonic for oily skin – It makes an excellent remedy for fine wrinkles, cracked skin, itching and inflammation.
- Lemons have a high content of acid which makes them suitable for cleaning and killing bacteria.
- Oranges contain antioxidants that help fight the free radicals that damage and age our skin.

SOURCES: WebMD, Neurological, CDC, USDA