



Nutrition for a Healthy Brain

WHAT

Don't make perfection the goal.

Eat enough calories

Eat whole foods

Eat Omega-3s

Get enough protein

Limit sugary foods & alcohol

Feed your gut bacteria

Eat on a schedule

WHY

Food should nourish your body & your mind.

Your brain uses about 25% of your calories when you are at rest. Not eating enough calories can increase stress hormone production. Chronic stress increases nutrient needs.

Processed foods do not have nutrients your brain needs to stay healthy. Fruits, vegetables & whole grains provide needed nutrients.

Omega 3 Fatty Acids are essential for brain structure & may protect from damage from sub-concussive hits.

Choline (found in egg yolks & red meat) is needed to make a neurotransmitter called acetylcholine that is essential for motivation, attention, learning & memory - It also promotes REM sleep.

Empty calories cause energy spikes & lows.

Eating high fiber & fermented foods promotes good bacteria.

Your cells have an internal clock & like to be on a schedule.

HOW

Eat healthy MOST of the time - No one has a perfect diet.

Don't skip meals.

Pack snacks on busy days.

Ask for help if you don't know how much you need to eat. (Athletes often underestimate calorie needs).

Add in additional carbohydrate immediately before training to offset the calories burned.

Add carbohydrate & protein immediately after to promote recovery.

Swap white bread for whole grain bread.

Alternate rice for quinoa & barley.

Choose whole fruit over juice.

Add spinach or other greens to smoothies.

Make 1/2 your plate fruits & vegetables.

Eat fatty fish 2 X week (salmon, mackerel, sardines, anchovies)

Add chia seeds, ground flax seeds & flax seed oils to smoothies.

Snack on walnuts

Add eggs to your breakfast & moderate amounts of red meat.

Save sugary foods for immediately before training for instant energy.

Make water your primary drink at meals.

Add beans to burritos, soups & grain bowls.

Eat probiotic yogurt.

Eat fermented foods - miso, kimchi, sauerkraut, kombucha.

Take a few minutes each to make a plan for the next day.