



## Super Foods for the Brain

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There is a lot of information on the internet that will tell you what you should not be eating when you have a brain tumor. How about what you **CAN** be eating to support your brain health? Backed by scientific research, here are some “super foods” for the brain that help your brain and brain cells function optimally. The benefits of eating these foods range from decreasing headaches and migraines to improving cognitive performance and decreasing inflammation/edema or swelling in the brain.

- **Walnuts:** Provides omega-3 fatty acids that support brain health and decrease inflammation
  - Serving size: 1 oz – aim for 4-7 servings/week
- **Avocados:** Provide omega-3 fatty acids that support brain health and decrease inflammation
  - Serving size: ½ avocado per day - aim for 4-7 servings/week
- **Pepita seeds or pumpkin seeds:** Provide Magnesium which helps to prevent migraines and helps the brain signal optimally
  - Serving size: 1 oz – aim for 3-5 servings/week
- **Dark chocolate:** Provide Magnesium which helps to prevent migraines and helps the brain signal optimally
  - Serving size: 1-2 oz – aim for 3-4 servings/week
- **“SMASH” fish:** Provides omega-3 fatty acids that support brain health and decrease inflammation
  - Serving size: 3-4 oz – aim for 2-4 servings/week
  - Salmon, mackerel, anchovy, sardines, herring
- **Red and orange plants:** Provide Vitamin A, C, polyphenols, and anthocyanins to all support brain health and are natural cancer fighters
  - 1 serving = 1 cup (size of your fist) - aim for 3-5 servings/week
  - Tomatoes, bell peppers, squash
- **Green plants:** Provide Vitamin K, polyphenols, and isocyanthionates to all support brain health and are natural cancer fighters
  - 1 serving = 1 cup (size of your fist) - aim for 3-5 servings/week
  - Bok choy, Brussels Sprouts, Lettuce greens of any kind, broccoli, chard





- **Egg yolks:** Provide Choline, which is a precursor for a neurotransmitter called acetylcholine to help preserve brain function
  - Serving size: 1-2 eggs – aim for 2-5 servings/week
- **Brazil nuts:** Provides 100% of dietary needs for selenium, which is a precursor for glutathione – an antioxidant our body makes with selenium
  - Serving size: 1-2 oz – aim for 5-7 servings/week
- **Medium Chain Triglyceride (MCT) oil:** Helps to improve cognition
  - This comes from coconut and palm and is sold as an unflavored oil you can use in coffee, tea, on top of salad dressings, or blend in with things like yogurt
  - Serving size: 1 tbsp per day – aim for 5-7 servings/week
- **Mushrooms:** Provides beta-glucans, which can be cancer fighters, and helps to regulate the immune system
  - Serving size: 1 cup raw or ½ cup cooked – aim for 2-3 servings/week
- **Vitamin D rich foods:** Vitamin D is protective of neurons (brain cells), and helps to regulate the immune system
  - Like mushrooms, canned salmon, fortified dairy products
  - Serving sizes vary - aim for 1 serving of 1 vitamin D rich food per day
- **Blueberries:** Provides Vitamin C, polyphenols, and anthocyanins to all support brain health and are natural cancer fighters
  - Serving size: 1 cup – aim for 3-7 servings/week
- **Herbal tea:** Provides L-Theanine, which can help regulate mood, sleep, emotions, and cortisol (stress hormone) and hormones like serotonin and dopamine,
  - Serving size: 1 cup (8 oz or 237mL) – aim for 5-7 servings/week
- As a disclaimer, please do not start or use any supplements before telling your Doctor, Radiation Oncologist, or Registered Dietitian, because some of them interact with cancer directed treatment.



References:

Bo Ekstrand, Nathalie Scheers, Martin Krøyer Rasmussen, Jette Feveile Young, Alastair B Ross, Rikard Landberg, Brain foods - the role of diet in brain performance and health, *Nutrition Reviews*, Volume 79, Issue 6, June 2021, Pages 693–708, <https://doi.org/10.1093/nutrit/nuaa091>

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