

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



The Best Way To Fortify Your Brain

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond.

We've all seen the television commercials with active seniors sharing how they saw immediate improvement in memory and focus by taking a brain supplement. The claims are compelling and have caused many of us to wonder if these supplements really work.

Most over-the-counter (OTC) supplements contain a combination of three nutrients: omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish oil; vitamin E; and B-complex vitamins. All of these nutrients have been shown to help improve cognitive function are traditionally found in the Mediterranean diet, the DASH or dietary approaches to stop hypertension diet, and the MIND or Mediterranean-DASH intervention for neurodegenerative delay diet.

One thing to keep in mind if considering a brain supplement is that supplements are not strictly regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the same way as prescription and OTC medications so it's important to do the research to find out which supplements are most effective. Many factors should be considered in the selection of brain health supplements such as ensuring certification, dosage, and always discussing any supplements and vitamins with a health care provider, before taking them.

An article from [Harvard Health](#) cautions that while these nutrients seem to improve cognitive function, it is unclear how they work to improve our brain health. This doesn't mean brain supplements don't work, the article says, but rather that there is a lack of evidence-based science about the effectiveness of these nutrients. The [Alzheimer's Association](#) also cautions that while there is some evidence that suggests eating a healthy diet may help prevent cognitive decline and dementia, there isn't a single food, ingredient, or supplement that has been shown to prevent, treat or cure degenerative disease, including Alzheimer's or other dementia.

The takeaway regarding supplements is that if you are looking for ways to protect your brain health, there isn't a "magic pill." The most important strategy for protecting your brain health is to live a brain healthy lifestyle, including following a brain healthy dietary pattern that includes a lot of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains, combined with regular physical activity.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Perhaps the best approach for slowing cognitive decline and supporting your brain health includes incorporating brain healthy eating into your lifestyle. Research shows the best brain foods are the same ones that protect your cardiovascular health.

- **Green leafy vegetables.** Kale, spinach, collard greens, and broccoli are rich in vitamin K, lutein, folate, and beta carotene—all which can help slow cognitive decline.
- **Fatty fish.** Salmon, cod, canned light tuna, and pollack are all high in omega-3 fatty acids (and low in mercury) and are linked to lower levels of the protein clumps found in the brains of people with Alzheimer's.
- **Berries.** Strawberries and blueberries get their color and memory-improving ability from flavonoids.
- **Caffeine.** Tea and coffee may give you a boost in the morning, but research shows higher caffeine consumption leads to better scores on mental function tests and helps solidify new memories.
- **Nuts and seeds.** Nuts and seeds are excellent sources of protein and healthy fats. For example, walnuts may also improve memory. Walnuts are high in a type of omega-3 fatty acid called alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), linked to lower blood pressure and cleaner arteries. Studies have also linked higher walnut consumption to improved cognitive test scores.
- And don't forget to **BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle** that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote:
 - Stress resilience
 - Nutrition
 - Physical activity
 - Sleep
 - Social connection
 - Emotional wellbeing
 - Meaning and Purpose
 - Cognitive stimulation and creativity
 - Engaging with nature
 - General health
 - Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is a collaborative effort with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, to build brain healthy communities through education, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention, and optimization of performance*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the **Be Brain Healthy** movement, **because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference**. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).