



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Eating More Fruits and Vegetables Could Lengthen Your Life

*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. **Springtime is upon us and with it comes the plentiful and readily available fruits and vegetables that are vital to a brain healthy diet. Today, we look at the recommendation from researchers that we eat five servings of fruits and vegetables each day.***

There is nothing new about the prevailing wisdom that eating fruits and vegetables is an important component of a healthy diet. At the BHI, we extol fruits and vegetables as part of the Mediterranean-style diet that promotes brain health.

But are we getting enough of the good stuff? A study released in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation* concluded that a diet featuring five servings of fruits and vegetables – specifically three vegetables and two fruits – is strongly associated with longevity.

In the study, researchers looked at the diet and mortality of more than 100,000 American men and women for about 30 years and combined it with similar studies from around the world. A total of more than 2 million participants were studied. The study found people who adhered to the “5 a Day” standard had a 13 percent lower risk of death from any cause, a 12 percent lower risk of dying from cardiovascular disease, a 10 percent lower risk of cancer death, and a 35 percent lower death risk from respiratory diseases.

Not all fruits and vegetables promote longevity, however. Spinach, lettuce, and kale, along with other green leafy vegetables, and fruits and vegetables rich in vitamin C and beta carotene like citrus fruits, berries, and carrots produced positive results. Starchy vegetables such as peas, potatoes, and corn were not associated with reduced death risk, nor were fruit juices.

According to Dr. Uma Naidoo, the BHI’s NeuroNutritionist and a best-selling author, told Healthline green leafy vegetables are “folate-rich foods (that) are highly anti-inflammatory, promoting the body’s natural detoxification process and improving mental health. Then, you

have the non-starchy vegetables like cucumbers, radishes, asparagus, cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower. These are abundant in polyphenols and fiber, which improves gut health and promotes a balanced immune system and mood.”

So, if fruits and vegetables are so great, should we eat even more than “5 a Day?” The study found no additional benefit from exceeding the recommendation. And because only about 1 in 10 Americans currently reach that goal, five servings is a good place to start.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Following are two fun, healthy, and easy recipes from The Nutrition Source at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health to help you reach the “5 a Day” mix of fruit and vegetables. [Visit this website for more brain healthy recipes.](#)

1. FRUIT: Arugula, watermelon, feta, and mint salad with balsamic vinaigrette

Ingredients:

- 3 ounces fresh arugula leaves
- 4 cups watermelon, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 tablespoon fresh mint leaves, finely chopped
- 3 1/2 ounces feta cheese
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinaigrette

Preparation:

For vinaigrette, combine 1 tablespoon of aged [balsamic vinegar](#), 3 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil, and ½ teaspoon of mayonnaise in a small bowl. Whisk mixture vigorously to form stable emulsion. To start salad, cut watermelon into 1-inch pieces and drain for 15 minutes. Tear arugula into bite-sized pieces and place in large salad bowl. Add chopped mint to arugula and mix thoroughly. Add drained watermelon to bowl. Crumble feta cheese on top of mixture. Season with salt and pepper. Toss lightly with desired amount of balsamic vinaigrette.

2. VEGETABLE: Asparagus spears with Mandarin orange

Ingredients:

- 1 pound fresh asparagus
- 1 mandarin orange
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Salt (optional) and pepper to taste

Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Break off and discard the woody ends of the asparagus and cut the stalks into 2-inch pieces. Put the asparagus in a bowl, drizzle it with the olive oil, and sprinkle it with pepper, and if desired, salt. Toss gently to distribute the olive oil. Spread the asparagus evenly on a baking sheet and roast in the oven until tender, about 25 minutes. Remove from the oven, place in a warmed bowl, toss with the Mandarin orange sections, and serve.

BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

1. Stress resilience
2. Nutrition
3. Physical activity
4. Sleep
5. Social connection
6. Emotional wellbeing
7. Meaning and Purpose
8. Cognitive stimulation and creativity
9. Engaging with nature
10. General health
11. Positive impacts

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

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address 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](#).