



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Blood Sugar Matters for Your Brain Health, Performance and is a Risk Factor for Brain Illness

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain healthy lifestyle 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. **Today, we look at the role blood sugar plays in the experience of brain health and performance.***

Do you or someone you know or care about, sometimes struggle with *any or all* of the following: You feel like your brain is foggy. You feel low on energy and stamina and you feel like you are dragging. You feel you are easily irritable, agitated, or more moody than you want to be.

If YES, it is important to consider if you are maintaining balanced blood-sugar levels.

Over fifty million adults over 45 years of age in the U.S. may struggle with blood sugar issues. In other words, over 60% of American adults 45 and up are metabolically unfit... and many don't know it.

This means that, on a daily basis, they struggle with the ability to properly metabolize carbohydrates (carbs), which is how the body breaks down carbs to produce the *right* amount of sugar it needs and this impacts your body and brain health and performance.

This poor glycemic control can have **very noticeable and detrimental effects on your brain health and performance – how you look, feel, think and act** – including your energy, brain clarity, and irritability. No matter your age, it is vital that you maintain healthy blood sugar levels.

Your blood sugar levels are basically the amount of the sugar called “glucose” in your blood.

This glucose is your body and brain’s primary source of energy, a **key source of fuel for your brain** and your central nervous system!

The [glycemic index](#) gives you a way to tell slower-acting "good carbs" from the faster "bad carbs." You can use it to fine-tune your carb-counting and help keep your blood sugar more steady.

Glycemic index is a number. It gives you an idea about how fast your body converts the carbs in a food into glucose. Two foods with the same amount of carbohydrates can have different glycemic index numbers.

The smaller the number, the less impact the food has on your blood sugar.

- 55 or less = Low (good)
- 56- 69 = Medium
- 70 or higher = High (bad)

Look for the glycemic index on the labels of packaged foods. You can also find glycemic index lists for common foods on the Internet. Harvard Health Publishing offers a [glycemic index for over sixty foods](#).

The glycemic index shouldn't be the only thing you consider when making choices about what to eat. The fact a food has a low glycemic index doesn't mean it's super-healthy, or that you should eat a lot of it. Calories, vitamins, and minerals are still important.

[Portion sizes](#) matter, too. The more of whatever kind of carbs you eat, the more they'll affect your blood sugar. That's what the glycemic load tells you. It's a number you may see along with the glycemic index in lists. Think of it as the glycemic index for a specific amount of that food.

There are many reasons your brain and body can sometimes feel slow, foggy, sluggish, and irritable. If these symptoms persist, consider making an appointment with a medical professional.

You might consider having your blood sugar levels tested. Then strive to live a more brain healthy lifestyle to promote optimal performance and decrease risk of brain illness. Take smart steps to maintain healthy blood sugar levels, such as reducing processed foods and sweetened foods, getting plenty of exercise and proper sleep, and consuming high-quality and effective forms of the right nutrients.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Here are some ways to maintain healthy blood sugar levels:

- Eat at regular times, and don't skip meals.
- Choose foods lower in calories, saturated fat, trans fat, sugar, and salt.
- Track your food, drink, and physical activity.
- Drink water instead of juice or soda.
- Limit alcoholic drinks.
- For a sweet treat, choose fruit.
- Control your food portions

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

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep
- Social connection
- Emotional well-being
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative, Inc. (BHI), a 501(c)(3) non-profit, 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 promote brain healthy lifestyles, foster protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes at the individual and community level for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. ***Brain Health Matters and Lifestyle Makes a Difference.***