

## 8 nutrients to protect the aging brain

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Brain health is the second most important component in maintaining a healthy lifestyle according to a 2014 AARP study. As people age they can experience a range of cognitive issues from decreased critical thinking to dementia and Alzheimer's disease. In the March issue of Food Technology published by the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), contributing editor Linda Milo Ohr writes about eight nutrients that may help keep your brain in good shape.

1. **Cocoa Flavanols:** Cocoa flavanols have been linked to improved circulation and heart health, and preliminary research shows a possible connection to memory improvement as well. A study showed [cocoa flavanols](#) may improve the function of a specific part of the brain called the dentate gyrus, which is associated with age-related memory (Brickman, 2014).
2. **Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Omega-3 fatty acids have long been shown to contribute to good [heart health](#) are now playing a role in cognitive health as well. A study on mice found that omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acid supplementation appeared to result in better object recognition memory, spatial and localizatory memory (memories that can be consciously recalled such as facts and knowledge), and adverse response retention (Cutuli, 2014). Foods rich in omega-3s include salmon, flaxseed oil, and chia seeds.
3. **Phosphatidylserine and Phosphatidic Acid:** Two pilot studies showed that a combination of phosphatidylserine and phosphatidic acid can help benefit memory, mood, and cognitive function in the elderly (Lonza, 2014).

4. Walnuts: A diet supplemented with walnuts may have a beneficial effect in reducing the risk, delaying the onset, or slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease in mice (Muthaiyah, 2014).
5. Citicoline: Citicoline is a natural substance found in the body's cells and helps in the development of brain tissue, which helps regulate memory and cognitive function, enhances communication between neurons, and protects neural structures from free radical damage. Clinical trials have shown citicoline supplements may help maintain normal cognitive function with aging and protect the brain from [free radical damage](#). (Kyowa Hakko USA).
6. Choline: Choline, which is associated with liver health and women's health, also helps with the communication systems for cells within the brain and the rest of the body. Choline may also support the brain during aging and help prevent changes in brain chemistry that result in cognitive decline and failure. A major source of choline in the diet are eggs.
7. Magnesium: Magnesium supplements are often recommended for those who experienced serious concussions. Magnesium-rich foods include avocado, soy beans, bananas and dark chocolate.
8. Blueberries: Blueberries are known to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activity because they boast a high concentration of anthocyanins, a flavonoid that enhances the health-promoting quality of foods. Moderate blueberry consumption could offer neurocognitive benefits such as increased neural signaling in the brain centers.

**More information:** 2014 Brain Health Research Study:  
[www.aarp.org/research/topics/h ... g-sharper-study.html](http://www.aarp.org/research/topics/h...g-sharper-study.html)

Provided by Institute of Food Technologists

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