

## Module 12 Transcript

### The Crucial Nutrients of Mental Fitness

Now that we've outlined the basics, and demonstrated how what you eat, and your brain's overall well-being, will always be intimately connected, let's talk nutrients. Because, simply put, your brain is made of food. Or, to be more specific, your brain is made of the things food is made of. And it's only by taking a deeper look at the nutrients that are in the food we're eating--and the food we're not eating--that we can begin to develop a plan to eat in a way that supports our best mental health.

Our brains consume 20 percent of everything we eat—and those foods provide the energy and nutrients to produce and support each element that makes up our brains. Those critical neurotransmitters and receptors? They're made from specific proteins and amino acids that you consume through food. Minerals like zinc, selenium, and magnesium not only provide the building blocks to form cells and brain tissue but also help to synthesize vital neurotransmitters. Other minerals like sodium and potassium are essential in conducting nerve impulses. When the brain is deprived of one or more of these brain-healthy nutrients, cognition, mood, and overall function will ultimately suffer. Take serotonin, the neurotransmitter linked to mood. Without eating foods that contain adequate levels of nutrients like iron, folate, and vitamin B12, your body cannot produce adequate levels of this mood-enhancing chemical.

You can dictate what sort of building materials you want to provide your brain. You can eat these very high-quality, nutrient-dense foods to help your brain work at its highest level. Study after study has shown a profound association between the degree to which people improve their diet and the degree to which their depressive symptoms improve. The same can be said for anxiety.

You've probably heard a lot about the Mediterranean diet--I mentioned it early on--it's very hot with doctors like myself these days, and for good reason. As I said earlier, it's full of the

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types of nutrients I'm talking about, the ones with real, observable effects on the brain and its processes. But I understand that simply telling you to eat in the Mediterranean style isn't enough. So let's get into the weeds a bit and look at the nutrients that are vital for overall mental fitness. I embarked on a mission to identify and pinpoint exactly which nutrients the scientific literature had the most power to combat depression and which foods had the most of these nutrients. This way, instead of following a rigid diet plan to the letter, you can seek out entire food categories that contain the most vital nutrients that promote brain health. By incorporating these twelve nutrients into your diet regularly, you can begin to get the food building blocks that most influence on mental health.

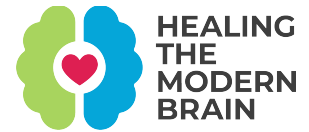
We'll go more in-depth in the next section, and we'll make sure that your plate is full of them after that, but for now know those twelve key nutrients are:

- **Folate.** This nutrient is not only important for expectant mothers, but it also helps support the creation of new cells. This B vitamin can be found in foods like, brussels sprouts, oranges, and leafy greens but my favorite source is lentils.
- **Iron.** The brain needs red blood cells to function at the highest level. The body uses iron to build hemoglobin, an important protein in those red blood cells that helps transport oxygen from the lungs to the brain. You can find iron in any type of meat but pumpkin seeds, oysters, and spinach.
- **Long-chain omega-3 fatty acids.** These long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids, including eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), are made in small amounts by the body in the liver, but also must be ingested through the foods you eat. These fatty acids are commonly found in seafood, including wild salmon, anchovies, oysters, and algae.
- **Magnesium.** Magnesium helps to regulate several important neurotransmitters, including those that facilitate mood. It's also known to improve sleep quality. This mineral is found in almonds, spinach, and cashews.
- **Potassium.** Potassium is needed for every electric impulse that travels along a neuron. Many fresh fruits and vegetables contain this essential mineral, including bananas, broccoli, sweet potatoes, and white beans.

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- **Selenium.** Selenium helps create a powerful antioxidant in your brain and is necessary for proper functioning of the thyroid gland, which is involved in regulating mood, energy, and anxiety. Mushrooms, Brazil nuts, oysters and oatmeal contain this mineral.
- **Thiamine.** Thiamine, also known as vitamin B1, is fundamental to brain health because of its role in energy production. It's found in nuts, and legumes, and if you eat meat, beef is a great source.
- **Vitamin A.** Several studies have now linked vitamin A to neuroplasticity, or the brain's ability to grow and adapt in response to the environment. You can find vitamin A in yellow colored vegetables – your body converts the carotenoids into vitamin A. You'll also find it in seafood like mackerel, and wild-caught salmon and if you're a meat eater liver is a fantastic source.
- **Vitamin B6.** Vitamin B6 plays a pivotal role in brain development and function. It's an important cofactor. Cofactors are the vitamins and minerals that catalyze the chemical reactions that allow our cells to make things like neurotransmitters. It's found in and eggs, pistachios, and several whole grains.
- **Vitamin B12.** Vitamin B12 is central to your production of mood-regulating brain chemicals like serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine and supports the myelination of brain cells, helping to transmit signals more efficiently and effectively. B12 is the largest vitamin that we absorb and only found naturally in animal products. Clams, liver, and mussels are foods that are high in B12.
- **Vitamin C.** Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that can counteract the damage caused by free radicals in brain cells. Cherries, chiles, red peppers and mustard greens are all foods that can get you a good dose of vitamin C.
- **Zinc.** Zinc is another mineral that helps to regulate brain signaling and neuroplasticity. Adding pumpkin seeds, oysters, and turkey to your diet can help increase your zinc levels.

Twelve nutrients. By incorporating these into your diet, you'll be able to start fostering a healthier mood, and better mental fitness. With your fork with each bit you're going to be



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signaling for more brain growth and telling your DNA to increase production of BDNF production. And--you'll feel a lot better as well.

Next section, we'll be diving more deeply into those food categories that contain the most of these 12 nutrients so you can build a simple, practical, enjoyable food plan for yourself and whoever's brain you want to feed.