

# Live Healthy—Be Happy

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A Practical Guide to  
Nutrition & Exercise  
for Maintaining  
Health and Vitality

A Newsletter for the  
Patients of Healthcare  
Providers

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## Foods Containing Healthy Brain Fats

- **Cold water fatty fish**—wild salmon, sardines, mackerel, herring. These can be fresh or canned. These contain fats that have been associated with a lowered risk of developing dementia.
- Other wild fish
- Flax seeds (ground fresh)
- Flax Oil for salads only (keep refrigerated and do not use for cooking)
- Walnuts and pumpkin seeds
- Eggs
- Cold or expeller-pressed, unrefined oils, especially olive oil and sesame oil

## The Best Carbohydrate Foods for Energy

- Whole Grains like brown rice, oats, barley, quinoa, millet, and 100% whole grain breads
- “Starchy Vegetables” like cooked carrots and beets, winter squash, yams, potatoes, parsnips
- Fresh Fruits like berries, apples, peaches, pears, nectarines, plums (eat whatever is in season).

## Feeding a Healthy Brain

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### Why Your Brain Needs Fats

Fats are essential for the healthy functioning of our brains. **A whopping sixty percent of our brains is composed of fats.** Fats are a primary ingredient of the membrane or envelope that surrounds each of our brain cells. This membrane protects the cell's contents and regulates the intake of nutrients into the cell. It also contains the receptors that are responsible for sending and receiving messages to and from other brain cells. So, **the nutrition of the brain and communication throughout the brain depend upon the presence of healthy fats** in the membrane surrounding each brain cell.

Fats are also the primary component of myelin, the substance that surrounds nerve fibers and enables impulses to move at very high speeds along the length of the nerves. Without this fatty covering, nerve impulses would travel about twelve times more slowly, resulting in body movements and thoughts occurring at abnormally low speeds.

There are several types of fats that are essential for our brain's structure and function. In terms of dietary requirements, the most important are the essential fatty acids, especially Omega-3 fatty acids. These fatty acids are found in plentiful quantities in the fat of wild fish, which supply EPA and DHA, two essential fats in the specific forms that our bodies require.

Fats that should be avoided are all hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils, any form of trans fats, and deep-fried foods. These fats are damaged by processing or high temperatures and are detrimental to the health of our brain cells. Many oils (eg. flax oil and safflower oil) cannot withstand heat and should be kept in the refrigerator and used only on salads or already cooked food. Extra virgin olive oil is best for light sautéing and delicious in salad dressings. When cooking at higher temperatures or when baking, use stable fats like butter or coconut oil that can withstand higher temperatures.



Omega-3 fatty acids found in the fat of wild fish are essential to our brain's structure and function.

### Carbohydrates for Brain Energy

**Carbohydrates supply the fuel that our brains require to maintain all of the functions of our minds and bodies** twenty-four hours each day. Glucose, which results from the breakdown of carbohydrates, is the energy currency that our brain cells (as well as the rest of our body's cells) uses.

Our brain cells monopolize a large portion of the glucose that is provided from food by consuming five times more than any other cells in the body. Following a **very low carbohydrate diet will starve your brain** and the rest of your body of energy. The result may be that you feel less alert, less mentally sharp, and more fatigued.

Non-starchy vegetables (which include greens of all kinds, broccoli, and many others) are important to eat because they contain vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients unique to plant foods that help to protect our brain cells from damage.

Marsha Sendar maintains a private practice in Santa Rosa providing physical therapy services, nutrition consultation, healthy exercise, and stress management instruction, and teaches classes at various locations in Sonoma County. For more information, or to receive a copy of the newsletter, contact Marsha at 707-570-2090, or send an email to [marsha@marshasendar.com](mailto:marsha@marshasendar.com).

## Healthy proteins are found in these foods:

- Fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products (yogurt, cottage cheese, other cheeses), lamb, beef, tempeh, and tofu.
- A combination of beans with whole grains, such as brown rice and corn.
- Other excellent protein sources containing some, but not all of the essential amino acids, are raw (not roasted or salted) nuts and seeds and some whole grains, like quinoa.

## Brain Healthy Sample Menu

### Breakfast

- Whole oats (not instant) with half cup yogurt, walnuts, and fresh berries

### Lunch

- Green salad with tomatoes, carrots, beets, any other fresh vegetables with olive oil and balsamic vinegar dressing.
- Sandwich of sliced turkey breast with avocado on 100% whole grain bread

### Dinner

- Baked or broiled wild fish with salsa
- Brown Rice
- Roasted mixed vegetables: zucchini, asparagus, red onions

### Snacks

- Hummus on carrots or celery; a peach or other fresh fruit with a few raw almonds

## Proteins for a Clear Mind and a Happy Mood

**You may not realize how important protein is for maintaining an alert mind and a happy mood.** Proteins are composed of units called amino acids. These amino acids are the raw materials with which we make neurotransmitters, the chemical messengers of the brain. The production of inadequate quantities of these chemical messengers can negatively affect our moods, ability to sleep, level of alertness, memory, and many other essential brain functions.

Our bodies need to obtain several of these amino acids from food on a daily basis in order to make these vital chemical messengers, as well as to provide structural materials for repair. Protein foods that supply all of the amino acids that our bodies cannot manufacture are called complete proteins.

**A word about protein quality:** It is best to eat animal protein foods that come from animals that have not been fed growth hormones and antibiotics. The best sources are free-range and organic meats and poultry; wild fish; eggs from free-range chickens, especially those fed Omega-3 feed; and organic dairy products. Charbroiling meats should be done in moderation because this process can create cancer-producing substances.

## Easy Recipe for Baked, Extra-Moist Salmon Filet

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Brush olive oil very lightly over surface of filet. Sprinkle sea salt and crushed black pepper over top of fish.

Bake in oven for 6-8 minutes (adjust for thicker filets and salmon steaks) at 400 degrees.

Turn oven down to 200 degrees to slowly cook the fish and retain moisture. Check fish in 20 minutes. It is done when the inside is pink and not translucent and you see white fatty streaks on the surface. Delicious as is with a squeeze of lemon or topped with salsa.

### Simple Salsa (or buy pre-made salsa)

- 1 1/2 cups diced fresh tomatoes
- 1/4 cup diced red onion
- 1-2 t. fresh lime juice
- 1/4 t. sea salt
- 1 t. seeded, ribbed, and diced jalapeno (if you like it hot)
- 2 T. finely chopped fresh cilantro

Optional extras: finely diced fresh red pepper, avocado, mango, pineapple, other fresh fruit.