



5 BRAIN CARE TIPS FOR BETTER TEST RESULTS

Food and drink can impact memory, concentration, focus and test results.

In the lead up to tests, the pressure is on our kids to remember a lot of information and to get great results. It can be a stressful time for kids and us parents, but did you know that the fuel (food and drinks) our kids are consuming in the lead up to and during their tests has the ability to:

- energise and support them, calm them, improve their alertness and help them sustain focus for longer; or
- it can make them feel tired, anxious and stressed. It can hinder their attention span and ability to concentrate.

In a nut shell, there are foods that boost our brain function and foods that hinder brain function. Scientific studies show this:

- a healthy diet improves learning and memory¹
- junk food decreases academic performance²
- higher fruit and vegetable intake linked to better school performance levels³

¹ [Nutrition and Academic Performance in School-Age Children The Relation to Obesity and Food Insufficiency](#)

² [Nutrition and Academic Performance in School-Age Children The Relation to Obesity and Food Insufficiency](#)

³ [Dietary Habits Are Associated With School Performance in Adolescents](#)

The foods that support our kids body and brain during exam time are wholefoods - fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, good quality meats, fish, eggs, wholegrains. These kinds of foods increase the flow of blood to the brain, boost memory function and can calm the nerves. On the flip side, the foods that can negatively impact memory, growth of new brain cells and mood are most processed foods. These processed foods are made using sugar and additives and preservatives.

Now, it's not uncommon for parents to tell me that the very foods that help our kids, are the foods they find most difficult to get their kids to eat. On the flip side, the foods that hinder our children's brain function are the foods they want to eat. But when children understand the why behind making better choices, they are more likely to accept it and make changes. That's why I encourage you to have this conversation with your children about their brain and the importance of taking care of it.

"Imagine Your Brain is like a Mobile Phone" - a Way to Talk to your Kids.

Let's imagine your brain is like a mobile phone. It has a lot of apps and storage space that need to be updated regularly. The apps of our brain include things like how to walk, talk, see, hear, feel, think, how to remember things and loads more. The storage space is where what we learn and experience are filed away.

Just like how your mobile phone needs to have its apps and storage updated, so does your brain. You know how sometimes when apps get updated and you don't actually install the update on your phone, the app can get glitchy or some functions won't work, the same happens with our brain. How our brain glitches is by not being able to concentrate, focus or remember things as easily as when it's been updated.

Similarly, when your phone battery gets low you need to recharge it. We always need to be continually recharging our brain. In fact, your brain is more thirsty for upgrades and recharges than your phone because it never ever stops working - it's always doing something. Even when you're sleeping, it's doing the important task of filing and organising your memories.

If we don't continually keep updating the apps and recharge of our brain, it can mean that we might not be able to play, learn, remember, walk and even sleep as well as we should be able to.

The best way to update your apps and recharge your brain is to continually nourish it with food and drink that boost your brain health.

How to Recharge Your Brain and Update its Apps Daily

1. Drink Plenty Of Water

Scientists estimate your brain is made up of about 75% water. When your brain doesn't get enough water, it can lead to headaches, concentration problems, memory problems and sleep issues.

Sugary drinks (including juices and flavoured milks) and energy drinks can cause your blood sugar to spike, and when it drops, you feel tired and this impacts your concentration.

The best drink to have all the time and especially during exam time is just plain water.

2. Get A Good Night's Sleep

Restful sleep is so important for your brain to be able to work properly. A tired brain is often unable to concentrate and even the simplest of questions or tasks seem difficult and take longer. You may find yourself needing to reread questions over and over again, wasting valuable exam time.

Before tests, get a good night's sleep. Turn off screens at least 1 hour before going to bed. Stop studying early in the evening and trust you have done as much as you can. Remember a tired brain isn't able to remember clearly anyway. Take time away from your exam notes, eat dinner, pack your bag and get your clothes ready for the next day. Then shower and get to bed early so you have the right amount of sleep for your age.

A well-rested brain can think more clearly. You will be able to concentrate and focus for longer.

3. Eat Breakfast

Quite simply, your brain needs food for it to work properly. In fact, your brain is a very hungry organ. It uses 20% of all the energy you take in each day. Ever heard of the hangries? Well it's true, when you're hungry, your brain will be focusing on your hunger and you're less likely to be able to make logical decisions.

A great breakfast has a mix of protein, complex carbohydrates and good quality fats. Some examples are scrambled eggs on sourdough toast with avocado, or yoghurt with homemade muesli, topped with fruit.

Even if you don't usually eat breakfast or you feel too nervous, try to at least have a smoothie made with fresh fruit and vegetables. Add in some nuts or other protein source to help keep your tummy fuller for longer.

4. Eat Brain Boosting Foods

There are definitely foods that are considered to be brain boosting so incorporating these into the way you eat on a daily basis will help:

- Foods containing omega'3s such as salmon, sardines, flaxseed, chia seeds, hempseeds and edamame. Omega'3s are a major building block of the brain and are recognised for enhancing memory.
- Good quality protein. Protein helps you feel fuller for longer and helps your brain send messages around your body. Examples are eggs, grass fed beef, organic or free range chicken, legumes, nuts and seeds and organic dairy.
- Berries contain anthocyanins and are considered to improve mental performance and promote learning and memory.

- Avocados and other monounsaturated fats such as olive oil and nuts. Monounsaturated fats have been linked to better memory and brain function.
- Walnuts, which amazingly look like a brain, are considered one of the best nuts you can eat for brain function. They have been identified as improving the ability to learn and remember.
- Dark Chocolate is said to help with memory, attention span and your ability to solve problems. Eat in small snack amounts only.

Avoid sugary and other processed foods and drinks as these hinder your brain's performance.

5. Snack Smart

Keep your snacks (and meals) light. Heavy foods or overeating can lead to your body using its energy to try and digest food rather than for thinking. Have snacks on hand that keep you alert. A trail mix of nuts (if you can have them), seeds and dried fruit with some cacao nibs is a great smart snack.

Simple swaps

Breakfast cereal	Eggs and sourdough, porridge topped with nuts (eg. walnuts) and fruit, or chia pudding.
Biscuits / cakes	Homemade pikelets topped with cream cheese and a little raw honey or mashed banana. Wholegrain crackers with cheese.
White bread sandwich with a spread as the filling	Wholegrain sandwich with filling of chicken and salad or mashed chickpeas and salad.
Chocolate / lollies/ice cream	Fruit and natural Greek yoghurt
Chips	Nuts and seeds / trail mix
Juice / flavoured milk / energy drink	water / milk / 100% coconut water

I hope this article gives you to loads of ideas of how to nourish your child's brain and have confidence to talk to your children about the importance of taking care of their brain to get better exam results.

Visit therootcause.com.au or reach out to your [local Certified Instructor](#) for more information to help you empower your kids to make better food choices.