

There are nutritional benefits to our bodies from eating certain foods and they can possibly influence our learning capability.

Example One: the typical “cram session” foods (potato chips, sugary snacks, pizza, caffeine loaded drinks, etc.) do not support sustained energy levels. Foods high in sugar or simple carbohydrates (like white rice, pasta, bread, and potatoes among other foods like candy and pastries) cause major fluctuations in our blood sugar. This is what causes the energy “spike” and then the “crash”. When these foods are eaten in moderation during a meal, they usually don’t cause too big a problem. However, when eaten alone, they can cause major fluctuations. This can lead to decreased energy and concentration levels. Sure disaster when you are trying to remember calculus formulas!

Take Home Message: Eat more WHOLE GRAINS. They provide stable energy to keep you from getting hungry and tired.

Example Two: typical “cram session” foods (the same potato chips, sugary desserts and pastries, pizza) contain a lot of added and saturated fat. Some is necessary and good for you such as those fats from plants and in the form of oils. But solid fats found in meats, butter, milk, and other animal products are hard on your heart and also are not good for your brain. When fat in your blood builds up, it slows down your blood flow. When your blood flow slows down, your brain gets less oxygen. Less oxygen means you can’t think as clearly.

Take Home Message: Eat liquid fats from vegetables and nuts much more often than solid fats from animal sources. Too much fat of any kind SLOWS YOU DOWN, AND SLOWS DOWN YOUR BRAIN.

Heart Healthy Fats to Know!: Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids. These are found primarily in salmon, mackerel, tuna and other fatty fish as well as in various nuts like walnuts, almonds, and pecans. These two kinds of fat are especially good for your brain (and your heart!)

Example Three: typical “cram session” foods are poor sources of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Fruits and vegetables are key.

Take Home Message: Fruits and vegetables provide B-vitamins, the vitamins necessary for our bodies to make energy. Your brain uses more energy than any other organ in your body. Less of those vitamins means less energy. Fruits and vegetables also contain loads of antioxidants-those chemicals that help fight cancer. They protect your brain from pollutants as well and keep it sharp for years to come.

Example Four: typical “cram session” snacks don’t usually include water. Your brain is almost 80% water. If it gets dehydrated, it doesn’t function as well.

Example Five: typical “cram session” foods don’t usually contain any protein, and if they do it usually isn’t high quality. Your brain needs good quality protein to keep functioning. Lean meats, yogurt, cheese, tofu, beans & legumes all provide high quality protein sources for your brain.

Take Home Message: This is a great opportunity to highlight beans, tofu and legumes that are low cost items and offer a high quality, low fat protein source.