Tips for maximizing your brain health...

By Steve Dorfman
Pat Dorfman & Associates
We spend every waking moment—and many sleeping ones—using our brains. But how many of us give much, if any, thought to keeping our brains in working order?

Think about it: Ourbrains and our hearts are our two most vital organs. If they stop working...we stop living.

But, while we’re inundated with information and advice about how to keep our cardiovascular systems purring, the gray matter inside our skulls is usually ignored—unless something goes horribly wrong.

Well, we think, why wait until there’s a brain problem? Instead, let’s think ahead.

We asked a few Palm Beach County health experts for tips on maximizing brain health...

**Fahrenheit 904 Seafood Restaurant**

**Catering to Your Curves**

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**BRAIN BOOSTERS**

**Pamela Higgins is a Certified Health Coach (CHC) and a member of the National Association of Drug-Free Practitioners (NADFP). Her training incorporates the idea that everything you put in your body is “food”—i.e., relationships, physical activity, and spirituality.

These primary foods are just as nourishing (or not) as the foods that we eat (secondary foods). Her programs include assessing and evaluating ways to improve and create healthy balanced diets.

For more information, visit totalhealthcoach.com

**BRAIN-BOOSTING FOODS**

**Lead on up on DHA, EPA and ALA**

Look for foods that contain lots of omega-3 fatty acids called DHA eicosapentaenoic acid and DHA docosahexaenoic acid, recommends local certified health coach Pamela Higgins.

“These nutrients are essential for fetal brain development, as well as long-term brain health in preventing degenerative diseases like Alzheimer’s,” Higgins explains.

Among the EPA/DHA-rich foods Higgins recommends:

- Wild salmon
- Mackerel
- Sardines
- Forces
- Herring
- However, if you’re not a fan of seafood, you can use alternative. “Eat foods rich in ALA (alpha-linoleic acid), some of which are converted by the body into DHA and EPA,” Higgins says. Seeds, such as chia from flaxseed and pumpkin seeds, are full of ALA.

**GO FOR THE GOOD GLUCOSE**

When your glucose (blood sugar) levels drop, so does your brain function. According to Higgins, “You must about 120 grams of carbohydrates, complex carbohydrates up to a day to help you stay alert and think clearly.” Maybe even more if you’re particularly active.

Higgins recommends filling up on the nutrient-dense, fiber-rich sources of energy found in fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Fruits favor brain fuel? “Sweet potato. It provides slow-burning fuel for the brain, and plenty of nutrients, including Vitamins A, C, K, B, magnesium, potassium, and several B vitamins.”

In addition, Higgins urges avocados to consume plenty of healthy fats, such as kale, spinach and or chard because they “promote good blood flow and are rich in antioxidants, which form free radicals in your brain.”

**DISEASE PREVENTERS**

**Dean Pagan, owner of the organic-food restaurant Fit Food Express in Delray Beach, notes the following foods are among disease preventers and brain boosters:**

**Berries:** “They contain a group of chemicals that could protect the brain from the type of damage that triggers neurodegenerative diseases like Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s.”

**Cherries:** “Nature’s little anti-inflammatories.”

**Apples:** “They contain a group of chemicals that could protect the brain from the type of damage that triggers neurodegenerative diseases like Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s.”

**Curry:** “Turmeric, the golden spice found in many curries, contains curcumin, which also has powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.”

**Cocoa:** “Studies have shown that eating flavonol-rich cocoa can improve blood vessel function, boosting blood flow and blood flow to the brain.”

**EXERCISE**

**Move it—or lose it**

Janine Tiede (above), the co-owner of Siddha Yoga in Delray Beach, knows that the mind and body are connected. That’s why she offers the following suggestions:

**Get plenty of aerobic exercise.** “It benefits include greater blood flow to your brain, improved mental focus and cognitive performance, a reduction in depression and anxiety, along with increased self-esteem.”

**2) Vary your routines.** Tiede cites the findings of Harvard psychiatrist Dr. John Rate, who says that when you exercise the body in new ways, it stresses the brain positively—perhaps even helping brain cells to grow.

**3) Be conscious of your breathing.** “With increased oxygen circulation comes improved mental clarity and overall relaxation,” says Tiede.