

Building a Better Brain

THESE NATURAL REMEDIES MAY HELP YOU KEEP YOUR MENTAL EDGE

Ask someone on the far side of 50 about “senior moments” and often you’ll get a laugh. But for many people there’s a nervous edge behind that playful acknowledgment: In one survey, 57% of Americans reported diminished brain function as their biggest age-related concern, compared with 43% who worried about declining physical capacity.

That fear is well-founded. According to the Alzheimer’s Disease Association, that particular form of dementia affects 15% of people between the ages of 65 and 74, a number that goes up to 44% for

those between 74 and 85.

Better brain health rests on a base of overall well-being including healthy diet, exercise, sleep and stress relief habits. In addition, a number of herbs and other natural therapeutic agents have shown themselves useful in improving various aspects of brain function, such as by boosting the activity of *neurotransmitters*, which carry signals between nerve cells, and improving circulation, which brings more oxygen and nutrients to hard-working brain cells.





Ginkgo



Krill



Passion Flower

NAME	WHAT IT IS
Ashwagandha*	<i>Withania somnifera</i> , a small shrub found in Africa, India and the Mediterranean; also known as winter cherry
B Vitamins	A class of water-soluble nutrients found in a wide variety of foods
Coenzyme Q10	A substance found in most of the body's cells; also known as ubiquinol; meat and fish are among the richest sources
DMAE	Dimethylaminoethanol, a substance produced in the brain; found in fish such as anchovies, salmon and sardines
Ginkgo*	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> , the oldest living species of tree; often planted as a long-lived, pollution-resistant street tree
Huperzine-A*	An extract taken from a species of club moss, <i>Huperzia serrata</i> , native to India and southeast Asia
Omega-3	A class of essential fatty acids that includes EPA and DHA, found in fatty fish and small crustaceans called krill
Phosphatidylcholine*	One of a class of specialized fat molecules known as phospholipids; derived from a nutrient called choline
Phosphatidylserine*	Derived from phosphatidylcholine; accounts for about 15% of the phospholipids in the brain's cerebral cortex
Rhodiola*	<i>Rhodiola rosea</i> , an herb native to Arctic and mountainous regions of Asia and Europe
Synaptose*	A formulation of amino acids, rhodiola, passion flower, B vitamins, chromium and metallosaccharide complex
Vinpocetine*	An extract taken from the lesser periwinkle (<i>Vinca minor</i>), a flowering plant used by landscapers as groundcover

*Generally available only in supplement form in the US.

For more brain aids, see energytimes.com.



Ashwagandha



Periwinkle



Rhodiola

WHAT IT DOES

Acts as an *adaptogen*, or stress fighter; helps ease anxiety and depression; has demonstrated neuroprotective effects in studies on both cognition and motor skills

B1 (thiamin) and B6 (pyridoxine) are needed for neurotransmitter production; B6, folate and B12 (cobalamin) help reduce *homocysteine*, a substance linked to brain and cardiovascular dysfunction

Crucial for energy production in all cells, including brain cells; being investigated as a possible therapy in Parkinson's disease and other neurological disorders

Helps increase levels of *acetylcholine*, a neurotransmitter crucial for improved focus and muscle control; studies suggest it may help reduce memory deficits

A potent antioxidant that promotes better blood flow within the brain; extracts have reduced cognitive decline in studies

Helps boost levels of acetylcholine in the brain; according to one meta-analysis, huperzine-A "could significantly improve cognitive performance" in Alzheimer's patients

Omega-3s fight inflammation and are required for healthy cell membranes; DHA is particularly crucial for proper brain function; low omega-3 levels have been linked to vascular dementia and depression

Required for healthy cell membranes and proper nerve impulse transmission; has been linked to enhanced cognition and memory

Promotes proper binding between neurotransmitters and cell membranes; teams up with the omega-3 DHA to keep brain cells healthy; supplements have improved cognition in test animals

Helps the body adapt to physical and mental stress; has shown neuroprotective effects; study volunteers who took rhodiola have shown improved memory and concentration

Designed to reduce cravings by producing a rewarding sense of contentment and satisfaction; has been used by people with addiction problems and those looking to lose weight

Protects brain cells from the effects of *ischemia*, or insufficient blood flow, making it potentially useful after strokes; has helped seniors with cognitive dysfunction in studies

NOTE: Always consult with your healthcare practitioner for help in designing a supplementation program, especially if you have a pre-existing condition.

PHOTOS: ASHWAGANGHA BY VINAYARAJ, RHODIOLA BY ALPSPACE