

10 superfoods to grow your baby's brain

Some foods have a positive impact on your growing baby's memory and ability to learn. Read on...

BY ASHLEY KOK

POSTED: 18 MAR 2016 17:48 | UPDATED: 24 MAR 2016 17:41

Share this:



Your baby's brain starts forming three weeks after conception, so it's vital to pay attention to the food you put in your body, since this will have an effect on your baby. A baby's brain undergoes rapid changes between weeks 24 and 42 of pregnancy, while the brain grows significantly from week 34.

Check out SP's list of stand-out foods that offer top nutritional benefits for both you and baby, according to Body with Soul nutritionist Susie Rucker and Jaclyn Reutens, a clinical and sports dietitian at Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants.

1. Pumpkin seeds

Packed with zinc and antioxidants, pumpkin seeds are great for boosting immunity and mopping up free radicals in the body.

What you need: 7mg of zinc daily during pregnancy. Whole roasted pumpkin seeds contain about 10mg of zinc per 100g.

Dish it up: Eat these on its own or make a pesto sauce for pasta by blending with leafy greens like watercress.

2. Sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes are high in soluble fibre, which helps to prevent constipation, a common problem among mums-to-be.

What you need: Orange fleshed sweet potatoes have the highest levels of beta-carotene, a nutrient converted by your body to vitamin A. About 700mcg daily is recommended.

Dish it up: Boil two large sweet potatoes, some ginger, dried black dates and dried longan for 30 minutes, or till potatoes soften. Add sugar to taste.

3. Avocados

The skin-enhancing properties in an avocado — an excellent source of monounsaturated fats and vitamin E — help the mum-to-be fight her skin woes. Fat also makes up around 60 per cent of the baby's developing brain.

What you need: 25 to 35 per cent of your daily calories should come ideally from monounsaturated fat.

Dish it up: Sliced avocado tastes great with salads and sandwiches!

4. Organic Greek yoghurt

Organic Greek yoghurt is a good source of calcium to help meet your increased calcium needs during pregnancy. It protects the expectant mother's bones and teeth, while maximising baby's bone development. Yoghurt is also high in protein, which helps in the increased tissue growth during pregnancy, even as it prevents iodine deficiency.

What you need: A 150g portion of Greek yoghurt provides about 50mcg to 100mcg of the 140mcg of daily recommended iodine. If organic yoghurt is not available, regular Greek yoghurt offers similar nutrition.

Dish it up: Drizzle some honey and add nuts and seeds to Greek yoghurt for breakfast.

5. Lentils

A good source of protein and soluble fibre, lentils not only keep pregnant women full longer to prevent overeating, it also helps to control blood sugar levels. Pulses also contain lots of iron, which boosts the performance of brain chemicals in both the mother and baby.

What you need: A serving of lentils provides 6.6mg of the 14.8g of iron recommended daily.

Dish it up: Add butternut squash, peppers, cabbage or tomatoes to lentil soup. This combination with vitamin C boosts the iron available in your body.

6. Green Leafy Vegetables (Watercress, Kale, Spinach)

Green leafy vegetables are high in iron, which increases haemoglobin levels and prevents anaemia during pregnancy. Spinach also contains folate, which is responsible for the production of new DNA and the regulation of cell metabolism in both you and your baby.

What you need: 400mcg of folate per day — a 180g portion of cooked spinach provides 262.8mcg, while an 80g portion of raw spinach provides 154mcg.

Dish it up: Best eaten raw, so toss these into a salad with your choice of dressing.

7. Eggs

Eggs are a great source of protein and biotin, which supports the health of the skin, digestive tract and nerves in both mother and baby. Eggs also contain high levels of choline, which is essential to developing memory, as well as a life-long ability to learn.

What you need: 450mg of choline is recommended per day, with egg yolk being the richest source. One hard-boiled egg gives you 113mg of choline.

Dish it up: Cook eggs fully in a small amount of fat/oil to reduce the risk of salmonella poisoning. It's best to pan-fry or boil eggs or make omelettes.

8. Raw cashews

Besides being a good source of protein, raw cashews contain magnesium, which prevents muscle cramps during pregnancy. Its high iron levels boost haemoglobin production in your blood — without this mineral, expectant women may experience fatigue.

What you need: 27mg daily — a 283g serving of dry-roasted cashews contains 1.7mg of iron.

Dish it up: Eat the nuts on their own, toasted, and toss some into salads or add to cereal.

9. Anchovies

Anchovies (ikan bilis) are high in calcium, which is required to build healthy bones and teeth in baby. Be mindful of your salt intake when eating anchovies as these are high in sodium and may increase your risk of pre-eclampsia if you eat too much.

What you need: 27mg daily, an 850mg serving of anchovies provides about 200mg of calcium.

Dish it up: Add to soups or fry them before using as a garnish during your meal.

10. Salmon

Salmon is high in protein and the omega-3 fats vital to foetal brain development.

What you need: Expectant women should take at least two portions of fish per week (at least one should be oily).

Dish it up: Cook fish fully by baking or pan-frying it. For extra flavour, add Cajun or Italian herbs.

Source: <http://www.smartparents.sg/en/pregnancy/10-superfoods-to-grow-6237676>