**High Performance Brainpower: Three Pillars**

In order to achieve top-notch mental performance and the ability to utilize your full mental potential, three ayurvedic factors need to be functioning at peak performance, and all three must be coordinated. Maharishi Ayurveda identifies three equally important pillars of good health, which are needed in order to achieve this state of mental wholeness and balance...

* **Diet**
* **Sleep**
* **Lifestyle**

There are three equally important parts of mental performance. The key word here is balance. Keeping your mind-body system in balance means the three aspects of mental performance are in harmony and operating at their peak. All three of these are nourished in Maharishi Ayurveda.

1. Learning and comprehension, governed by [Vata](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/doshas/vata.html) dosha: called **"Dhi"**
2. Processing and retaining knowledge, governed by [Pitta](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/doshas/pitta.html) dosha: called **"Dhriti"**
3. Memory or recall, governed by [Kapha](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/doshas/kapha.html) dosha: called **"Smriti"**

**Herbals to Maximize Mental Potential**

Maharishi Ayurveda talks about a special class of herbs called *medhya* herbs — herbs especially useful for the mind. These herbs individually enhance learning, retention and recall and also promote the coordination among the three factors. They provide powerful nourishment for the brain.

Shankhapushpi or Aloeweed, the authentic [Brahmi](http://www.mapi.com/products/herbal-supplements/single-herbs/organic-brahmi.html) or Herpestis monniera and Indian Pennywort or Centella asiatica, also known as Gotu Kola, are some well-known ayurvedic herbs known to promote the health and functioning of the mind. Aloeweed, for example, enhances memory and problem-solving ability even under situations of day-to-day stress. Gotu Kola is a memory-enhancer with *vayasthapana*, or age-inhibiting qualities.

Synergistic formulas that contain not only these herbs but other supporting and balancing herbs such as [Ashwagandha](http://www.mapi.com/products/herbal-supplements/single-herbs/organic-ashwagandha.html) (Winter Cherry) to help boost resistance to stress are ideal, especially for individuals in high-stress job environments who need to be at the peak of their mental potential on a consistent basis.

Maharishi Ayurveda offers a wide range of mind supplements. [Intelligence Plus](http://www.mapi.com/products/herbal-supplements/mental-health/intelligence-plus.html) (formerly Study Power) has been shown in research to increase non-verbal intelligence in children. It is useful for anyone, of any age, who has to learn new information. [Mind Plus](http://www.mapi.com/products/herbal-supplements/mental-health/mind-plus.html) supports problem-solving ability, and is available in syrup form for faster assimilation. [Organic Youthful Mind](http://www.mapi.com/products/herbal-supplements/mental-health/youthful-mind.html) helps maintain mental clarity and memory no matter what your age.

Our traditional [Aroma Therapeutic Blends](http://www.mapi.com/products/aromatherapy/aromatherapy-oils.html) are ayurvedic essential oils with a long history of use and substantial [research](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed). Try our Aroma Therapeutic Blends for mental clarity, alertness or mental fatigue, and to enhance your mind's ability to focus. Peppermint oil and lemon oil are also effective pick-me-ups for the mind.

**De-Stress, Regularly**

We live in challenging times. Stress and anxiety can slow or inhibit mental performance. A calm mind, serene and in its equilibrium, gives you superior focus, attention span, retention of knowledge and problem-solving ability. Control stress before it becomes severe, because stress can damage or destroy brain cells. Many prescription pills for anxiety have side effects that can further erode mental performance.

Planning tasks ahead and managing timelines, taking occasional short (even five minute) breaks during periods of intense mental activity, and maintaining a healthy balance between work and relaxation can all help. The [Transcendental Meditation](http://www.tm.org)® technique, practiced twice a day for 20 minutes, has been shown to be extremely effective for managing stress. Listening to [Gandharva Veda](http://www.mumpress.com/gandharva-audios.html) melodies; diffusing aromas that help relax you, such as sandalwood or lavender; or a quiet evening stroll, alone or with a nurturing companion, can all help balance the mind and emotions.

The daily morning ayurvedic [abhyanga](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/massage/benefits-of-an-ayurvedic-abhyanga-massage.html) (self-massage) is excellent for both mind and body. It is a cleansing, toning, rejuvenating experience that can charge you up to meet a full day head-on. [The Raj](http://www.theraj.com) Maharishi Ayurvedic health spa can teach you traditional authentic, complete, home detoxification methods.

**Quality Sleep: Purifying, Performance Enhancing**

Lack of *quality* sleep is a modern plague. Alongside diet and lifestyle, quality sleep is a fundamental pillar of Maharishi Ayurveda. Optimal physical and mental performance is not possible if all three of the pillars — *Diet, Sleep and Lifestyle* — are not addressed.

Getting eight hours of sleep is less important than the quality of sleep, which, according to Maharishi Ayurveda, occurs when the mind is totally disconnected from the senses. Quality sleep recharges and rejuvenates the mind, improving both short-term and long-term mental prowess. How much or how little you need is an individual matter; go by what your body and mind tell you.

The Council of Maharishi Ayurveda Physicians advises a daily full-body [oil massage](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/massage/benefits-of-an-ayurvedic-abhyanga-massage.html) to increase stamina during the day and promote quality sleep at night. Cutting down on stimulants such as caffeine, [alcohol](http://www.mapi.com/blog/the-maharishi-ayurveda-view-of-alcohol.html) and nicotine; making work-related materials taboo in the bedroom and winding down the evening with calming activities, instead of stimulating ones, helps prepare the mind for restful sleep. Aromatherapy can help. Look over our [Aroma Therapeutic Blends](http://www.mapi.com/products/aromatherapy/aromatherapy-oils.html). [Slumber Time Tea](http://www.mapi.com/products/herbal-beverages/ayurvedic-teas/slumber-time-tea.html) and [Slumber Time Aroma Oil](http://www.mapi.com/products/aromatherapy/slumber-time-oil.html) can help you ease into restful sleep.

**Eat "Intelligent" Foods — Eat for High Performance**

Eat foods that are natural and pure. These qualities maximize the intelligence in the foods and provide premium raw materials to be absorbed or, using a computer analogy, downloaded by the body. When foods are as close to their state in nature as possible, nutrition is at peak value. Foods that have been genetically altered, processed or refined, canned or preserved, artificially colored or flavored are stripped of their natural intelligence. Ayurvedic experts state that these foods are weak in intelligence and disturb the intellect and the coordination among the three aspects of mental performance. Cooking with fresh, organic ingredients can take a little more time and effort. But your brain, and your entire physiology, will repay the effort with higher performance.

**The Power of *The Mix* — Nutrition at its Best**

The recommended ayurvedic diet is vegetarian. [Grains](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/plants-spices-and-oils/ayurvedic-grains-for-better-health.html), [beans](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/meal-planning/ayurvedic-protein-sources-beans-lentils-dahls.html) and legumes provide nutrients for the brain. Include plenty of cooked leafy greens. Several helpings of fruits and vegetables are recommended. Sweet juicy fruits are excellent cleansers — they help flush toxins out of the body. Freshly-squeezed fruit juices deliver nutrients quickly to your mind and body. And not all fats are bad fats. Fat performs essential functions in the body and brain. Ayurveda recommends ghee, or clarified organic butter. It's delicious and valued for its ability to transport the benefits of herbs and spices to the brain and to other parts of the body. Include dairy if you are not lactose-intolerant, such as whole organic milk and fresh yogurt. [Almonds](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/plants-spices-and-oils/the-benefits-of-almonds-in-ayurveda.html) and walnuts are also excellent brain foods.

**Junk Foods Are Just That**

Seek out high-performance intelligent foods. Junk foods and sugared drinks interfere with the absorption of nutrients by the body. Sweet fruits, [raisins](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/plants-spices-and-oils/ayurvedic-cooking-with-raisins.html) and dates are a much better option.

[Spices](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/plants-spices-and-oils/smart-ayurvedic-spices.html) are more than flavors. They are high-value specialty foods adding a powerful extra to a diet. Many spices enhance digestion and facilitate the clearing of toxins from the body. This means that the channels of the body, including those that serve the brain, will be clearer. [Black pepper](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-recipes/spices/black-pepper.html) in small quantities is particularly recommended for clearing the channels of the brain and promoting the free flow of oxygen to the brain. Plenty of research exists on the health benefits of simple spices, like black pepper or [cardamom](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-recipes/spices/cardamom.html).

Exposure to heavy metals such as lead and aluminum has been shown to be damaging for the brain. To detoxify, look into the classic purification treatments known as [*panchakarma*](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/detoxification/best-detox-with-ayurvedic-panchakarma.html) — the powerful ayurvedic detoxification modalities. Avoid alcohol and caffeine. Avoid toxins in your home, cleaning materials and, when possible, building materials.

Create high-performance eating habits. It's as important as what you eat. Sitting down to eat, focusing on the food rather than on work or other activities, and savoring the meal are important. Ice-cold drinks disrupt digestion and impair the assimilation of nutrients by the body, and should therefore be avoided.

**The Antioxidant Advantage**

The hundred billion cells in your brain continuously use oxygen to stoke the mental fire. But because the brain is such a heavy user of oxygen, it is particularly susceptible to oxidative damage. Free radicals — reactive oxygen-based chemicals that thrive on stress — pollution and chemicals in your food can build up, damaging cells and brain function over time.

Antioxidants are therefore crucial for continued effective functioning of the brain. [Amrit Kalash](http://www.mapi.com/products/herbal-supplements/immunity-antioxidants/amrit-kalash-products.html), the powerful broad-spectrum antioxidant from Maharishi Ayurveda, contains Amalaki, the Indian gooseberry, considered the richest natural source of vitamin C, along with a rich balance of other herbs. In published [research](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-research/index.html), Amrit has been shown to be 1,000 times more potent as a free radical scavenger than vitamin C or E.

Isolating an active substance from a food or a plant and taking it in the form of a pill or a capsule can sometimes do more harm than good. Beta-carotene, an antioxidant taken as a supplement, was shown in research to actually increase the risk of some forms of cancer. Take your antioxidants the way nature intended — in foods, designed by nature in a balanced form. Amrit Kalash is a natural mixture of 38 whole [herbs](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/plants-spices-and-oils/ayurvedic-herbs-at-home.html), whole fruits and whole [spices](http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/plants-spices-and-oils/smart-ayurvedic-spices.html) — a balanced formulation that creates no harmful side effects.

**Brain Exercise: The Ayurvedic View**

No matter what your age or your occupation, your brain needs to be constantly challenged to be at its peak in terms of performance. Whether it's doing logic puzzles, memorizing lines from Shakespeare, or learning a new skill, keep your brain busy, active, creating. Research shows this is as important as physical exercise.

***Disclaimer*** *The sole purpose of these articles is to provide information about the tradition of ayurveda. This information is not intended for use in the diagnosis, treatment, cure or prevention of any disease. If you have any serious acute or chronic health concern, please consult a trained health professional who can fully assess your needs and address them effectively. If you are seeking the medical advice of a trained ayurvedic expert, call or e-mail us for the number of a physician in your area. Check with your doctor before taking herbs or using essential oils when pregnant or nursing.*

<http://www.mapi.com/ayurvedic-knowledge/brain-power/three-pillars-of-brain-performance.html>