



Student Wellness Centre

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UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN

Eat Well, Work Hard, Feel Good

Did you know that eating a healthy diet increases energy, prevents chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer, and helps maintain healthy body weight? Eating well is an important part of achieving your goals and enhancing your academic performance.

What is considered eating well?

Eating a variety of healthy foods each day means having plenty of vegetables and fruits, having enough protein, and choosing whole-grain foods for carbs. This balanced diet will improve concentration and focus, enabling you to strive for success.

Dial In: Listen to Your Hunger, Fullness, and Thirst

Listening to and following your feelings of hunger, fullness, and thirst can help you decide when and how much to eat and drink to get the fuel you need

Quick breakfast ideas:

- Egg and cheese breakfast sandwich,
- Fresh fruit and yogurt,
- Oatmeal with fruits,
- Granola,
- Whole grain toast with nut butter and sliced apples, and
- High-fibre cereal bars.

Carry snacks in your backpack and be aware of your hunger cues to maintain your brain at its peak throughout the day.

Easy snack ideas for brain boost:

- Fresh or dried blueberries,
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Vegetables with hummus,
- Cheese with whole grain crackers,
- Trail mix or nuts, and
- *Applies with Almond or peanut butter*



Use the **Healthy Plate Method**: fill half your plate with salad or vegetable; $\frac{1}{4}$ with whole grains and

$\frac{1}{4}$ with protein.

Easy Peasy!

Give Your Brain and Your Grades a Boost with Nutrients It Needs

Carbohydrates and Sugar

The brain relies on glucose for fuel. Eating regular meals with carbohydrate-containing foods can help preserve adequate blood sugar levels to maintain cognitive function.

Eat whole grain products, starchy vegetables, legumes, milk, and yogurt to keep your energy level up.

Even sugar, a simple carbohydrate can part of a student's diet. The World Health Organization recommends no more than about 25 grams of sugar per day (about 6 teaspoons). Artificial

sweeteners are safe but should also be consumed moderately.

Fats

Important energy and nutrients comes from consuming foods with fat. A diet too low may result in poor concentration, irregular periods, dry skin and decreased feeling of fullness. Focus on including foods with unsaturated fats.

Your brain loves Omega-3 Fats, important for memory, performance, and behavioural function. Sources include salmon, tuna, halibut, nuts and seeds (e.g., flax, walnuts), and certain oils (e.g., canola, olive, flaxseed

Zinc

Zinc plays a crucial role in memory formation and cognitive stability. Foods high in zinc include wheat germ, bran cereal, and red meat.

Tips to make healthy food choices

- Eat vegetables and fruits at each meal and snack.
- Eat beans, lentils, and other legumes several times a week.
- Reduce the cookies, bakery products, chips, and other salty snack foods and sugary drinks
- Carry healthy snacks with you to avoid being negatively influenced when hungry.
- Compare the nutrition facts table on foods to choose products lower in sodium, sugars, or saturated fat

Iron

Adequate iron intake has been shown to improve mental function. Good sources of iron include lentils, cooked spinach, beef, whole wheat bread, and sunflower seeds.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin obtained through food such as salmon, sunlight, and supplements such as multivitamins. The main function of vitamin D is to maintain calcium and phosphorus levels in the blood and increase the absorption of calcium which are vital to bone health. It's recommended that all take a Vitamin D supplement during the winter months in Canada.

Fibre

Fibre helps the body release sugar in the blood slowly, which provides your brain with fuel over a longer period. Whole grain bread, vegetables, fruits, pasta, and beans are high in fibre.

Calcium

Calcium is needed throughout life to develop and maintain bone and teeth health. Calcium is also needed for the

muscles, including heart muscles, to work. Dairy products, nuts such as almonds, seeds, and leafy greens are good sources of calcium.



Good Food, Good Mood

Food can influence the production of neurotransmitters (brain chemicals) such as serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine. These chemicals help you feel calm, happy, and more capable of coping with stress.

Avocado

These are high in vitamin B₅, which plays a part in adrenal functions to help your body cope with stress.

Blueberries

Blueberries are rich in antioxidants and folate, which help produce mood-boosting serotonin.

Broccoli

This powerhouse of nutrition is a good source of folate. Folate is a tryptophan that helps promote the production of the "feel-good" brain chemical serotonin. Serotonin can provide a pick-me-up to help you study more effectively.

Salmon

The ultimate brain food for memory, performance, and mood-boosting function. Salmon is not only a great source of omega-3 fats but a good source of tryptophan.

Turkey

Turkey contains tyrosine, which triggers dopamine and norepinephrine production, enhancing energy, alertness, and feelings of well-being.

Did you know you have access to dietitians' services through the Student Wellness Center?

For more info, visit the student resources page on the SWC website: wellness.usask.ca

Drink Plenty of Water

Water gives the brain the electrical energy needed for all its functions, including thought and memory processes. Dehydration can cause focus, memory, mental fatigue,

headaches, and sleep problems. A common recommendation is to drink six or eight 250 ml glasses of water or other fluid every day. You may need more or less, depending on various factors such as exercise and climate. Carry a water bottle with you and drink throughout the day. The easiest way to know if you are drinking enough fluid is to look at the colour of your urine. Your urine will be clear or pale yellow if you drink enough water. A darker yellow means you are not drinking enough water. Pay attention to thirst cues.

The best way to stay hydrated is to make water your drink of choice.

Alcohol Affects Memory and Learning

Trying to study after having a few drinks is not the best or easiest way to learn. Alcohol inhibits a part of your brain called the hippocampus; a region vital to forming new memories. As a result, having alcohol in your system will greatly reduce your ability to store new information in your memory.

Limit Caffeine

Coffee, energy drinks, and other caffeine products cause a short-term burst of energy followed by a long-term slump. Limit caffeine to a maximum of 400 mg/day, equivalent to about 3 cups of coffee, 8 cups of green tea, and 5 (250ml) cans of Red Bull. If you drink caffeinated beverages, ensure you are also drinking enough water.



Vegetarian Eating

Vegetarian eating most commonly excludes meat, fish, and poultry, but there are variations as well. Many vegetarians adopt healthy lifestyles in addition to their eating practices and are often physically active and often use less tobacco, illicit drugs, or alcohol. Some, however, eat more restrictively or develop unhealthy habits. Ensure that you are getting the nutrition that your body needs.

Variations of a vegetarian diet:

- **Vegans** exclude all animal products.
- **Lacto-vegetarians** include dairy products.
- **Lacto-ovo vegetarians** include dairy products and eggs.
- **Flexitarians or part time vegetarians** eat small amounts of meat, fish, or poultry from time to time.
- **Pescatarians** include fish and seafood products. (Wozniak, 2020)
- **Macrobiotic** focus on unrefined carbohydrate foods, such as wholegrain bread, and legumes. (Sanders, 1995)

Nutrients to pay particular attention to:

Protein is how you ensure your essential amino acid intake requirement is being met. Try to eat incomplete proteins(grains and legumes) together.

Iron found in plant foods is more poorly absorbed than iron found in animal products. Optimize your iron absorption by eating vitamin C rich foods (e.g., citrus fruit, bell peppers, tomatoes, dried fruit) in addition to iron rich foods.

Zinc like iron, is poorly absorbed from plant foods. The best way to ensure zinc intake is adequate is by eating a

variety of nutrient dense foods and maintaining an adequate energy intake.

Vitamin B₁₂ requirements are quite low, but it is found primarily in animal food products. This vitamin is imperative to avoid nerve damage. Vegetarians and Vegans should be fortifying their diet with B₁₂.

Calcium /Vitamin D play a role in bone and teeth health as well as muscle contraction. Vegetarians who exclude milk products must plan carefully to consume foods rich in or fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

Use all of these techniques together to help you reach your academic goals!

- Breathe Well
- Connect Well
- Eat Well
- Move More
- Sleep Well
- Study Well
- Think Well



Additional Resources

- USask articles on nutrition:
students.usask.ca/health/self-help-articles.php#Askforhelp
- Eat Well Saskatchewan

- Dietitians of Canada:
dietitians.ca (check out the
blogs at
<https://www.dietitians.ca/Media/Member-Blogs.aspx>
- unlockfood.ca

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