



NEWS RELEASE

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Diet and lifestyle tips to boost your brain

*By Lt. Col. Sara Burnett,
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FORT LEE, Va. – Your brain, like your body, needs nourishment and exercise and we are learning more about the diet and lifestyle habits we need to help maintain memory, mental sharpness and concentration. Here are some suggestions to help keep your brain healthy now and for years to come. And, remember, you can find the food mentioned here in your local commissary at more than 30 percent savings.

Break the fast

Breakfast refuels your brain after a long period of overnight “fasting.” The brain uses glucose for fuel and eating a breakfast that contains complex carbohydrates will help your brain function better.

Eat more fruits and vegetables

Fruits and vegetables contain nutrients and antioxidants that stave off brain cell damage. Vegetables seem to have the edge for mental benefits, especially green leafy types. Include at least five to nine fruits and vegetables every day.

Limit bad fats

Avoid saturated and trans fats since they are linked to a greater risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease. Replace high-fat meat and dairy products with lower-fat versions and avoid

processed and junk foods since they often contain trans fats. Healthy omega-3 fats may lower the risk of memory loss and dementia so eat more fish and include in your diet omega-3-rich plant foods such as walnuts, flaxseed, soybeans and canola oil.

Lose excess weight

Maintaining a healthy weight as you age also appears to be protective. Studies indicate obesity is linked with a greater risk of developing dementia later in life. This risk is also greater if you have high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes.

Move it, don't lose it

Exercise helps relieve stress, improves mood, provides cardiovascular benefits and helps control weight. Research shows it can improve thinking skills and may help delay the onset of dementia.

Use your head

Keep your mind exercised by doing activities or playing games that stimulate and challenge your brain. People who are more mentally active throughout their lives tend to escape or have a later onset of cognitive disease.

Stay engaged

Older adults with a network of friends and who participate in social activities tend to preserve brain function better than those who don't socialize. Reach out and connect with your community.

Alcohol and caffeine

A number of studies show that moderate caffeine and alcohol intake may play a role in reducing the risk for cognitive decline but because they can also have negative effects on health, it's best to talk with your health care provider about whether it's appropriate to include these in your diet.

For more information about making healthy choices, visit Ask the Dietitian on <http://www.commissaries.com> and post your questions on the DeCA Dietitian Forum. Be sure to look for other useful information in the Dietitian's Voice archive. Sign up with the DeCA Dietitian on www.twitter.com and get messages sent to your cell phone today. For delicious

recipes, check out Kay's Kitchen. And to enjoy all your commissary has to offer, sign up for the *Commissary Connection*.

- DeCA-

— *Lt. Col. Burnett is an Air Force Reserve dietitian and a contributing writer to the Ask the Dietitian column.*

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*