

Smart Kid. Smart Parent.

Food for Thought

Eating the right foods can't make your child smarter, but it can help with mental alertness. Summer provides the perfect opportunity for parents to easily find the best "brain food" for their growing students.

According to [Dr. Allen Green](#), a pediatric expert and author of Raising Baby Green, "Behavior and academic performance are significantly affected by the quantity and quality of the foods we provide children during the school years... Children's brains are built differently depending on what they are fed when they are rapidly growing." In fact, "growing children quite literally are what they eat."

Summer ushers in a season of effortless healthy eating, due to the simple fact that buying vegetables and fruit in season ensures that they taste better and cost much less! Local farmer's markets and fruit stands are chock-full of colorful and delicious fare and have just the right thing to rev up your child's cognitive function.

Look for fresh fruit such as blueberries, raspberries, and cherries. These rank high in antioxidants, which are vital to memory, concentration and overall [brain function](#). For a brain-healthy breakfast that will translate as a delicious treat for kids, try a berry and yogurt smoothie. On the go, throw some strawberries in a plastic bag. Or for a healthy mid-day snack, apple slices with peanut butter are convenient, and yummy too.

As far as vegetables go, leafy greens especially are an overall brain super food. Spinach, for example, is high in brain-healthy [Niacin and B6](#), a vitamin that is necessary for manufacturing brain chemicals and nerve impulse transmitters. Carrots, tomatoes, broccoli, avocados, peppers, and yes, even brussel sprouts, are equally important in feeding the mind and the body.

If you have a picky eater on your hands, try mixing chopped vegetables into pasta and soup, or on top of a pizza. And don't shy away from serving a salad as a meal. Topped with grilled chicken or salmon, drizzled with your family's favorite dressing, and full of brain-boosting veggies, a salad can be a tasty

summer treat.

In addition to the local produce you might find at a summer market, a balanced diet of whole grains, fiber, and foods that are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and iron will help enhance a child's performance in school. Oatmeal, whole wheat bread and pasta, and brown rice are all a great source of whole grains and fiber that will enhance cognitive performance by slowing down the release of glucose in the blood system.

Encourage your kids to eat plenty of eggs and nuts, such as almonds and walnuts, sprinkle flax seeds in their oatmeal or cereal, and incorporate seafood like salmon and tuna into their diet to meet their omega-3 needs.

And to prevent low iron levels, which Dr. Greene [reports](#) has been linked to ADHD, look for foods like lean red meats, legumes, such as beans and lentils, leafy greens and vegetables, and even dried fruit, like prunes and apricots.

Helping your children reach their full learning potential by watching what they eat doesn't have to be a chore. Make eating healthy fun! Plan a day or two a week when your child is involved in the creation of meals. Suggest making funny faced pizzas for lunch, or cut out shapes in whole wheat pancakes for a Saturday morning breakfast. Just remember, a full healthy mind needs a full healthy belly!

Courtesy of Tutoring Club