

Food For Thought - Better Eating to Protect Your Brain

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Healthy living through watching what you eat is important, but old news... nobody is going to be surprised with yet another article claiming that maintaining a healthy weight through nutritious, healthy meals and snacks is essential for a healthy you.

What about healthy foods for protecting your brain? Now we got your attention! Across the pond in the "old world," or Europe for those who do not like quips, they are also apparently concerned with healthy nutrition and snacking. After all, processed foods high in sodium, sugar and saturated fats sell there just as successfully as they do here in the United States. A recent study conducted by Archana Singh-Manoux and colleagues published in the *Neurology* Magazine analyzed the eating habits of over 6,000 British government workers ages 30 to 60, and studied their changes in health over the 10-year span. Participants were tested not only on their physical health over the 10-year span but also administered reasoning, memory and semantic fluency tests throughout the study to test cognitive function over time.

The study revealed a fascinating correlation between an unhealthy Body Mass Index (BMI) and impaired or worsening cognitive function over time. Results that were even more surprising revealed that individuals with higher BMI with a tendency for even healthy snacking showed a steeper curve of cognitive decline over individuals with a healthy BMI. Of course, individuals who engaged in unhealthy eating habits, and maintained an unhealthy BMI displayed an even steeper curve of curve of cognitive decline.

The simple result? Those who were overweight or obese were more impaired in their cognitive abilities over time than those who maintained a healthy weight. Scientists speculated that weight-related vascular problems as well as fat-related brain secretions may significantly impact the aging brain.

Although cutting down on unhealthy snacks is a great start towards a healthy BMI, the aforementioned study did conclude that individuals who eat healthy foods can also have an unhealthy BMI. Healthy foods is the start, but not the solution. Healthy foods + monitoring calorie intake is.

Start protecting your brain by counting calories. It sounds extremely complex, time-consuming and tedious, but nowadays, it really isn't. For smartphone users, there are numerous calorie-counting apps out there that have an enormous database of foods and their nutrition facts compiled by fellow users. After a meal, just input the name of the food you ate, and the program will tally your results, letting you know if you are eating too much, too little, or taking in too much sodium or sugar.