

# 7 Brain Foods for Kids

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FROM THE WEBMD ARCHIVES 

As fast as children whiz from classroom to activity to home and back again, their brains are just as rapidly growing and changing.

The foods they eat are important. "These years are critical for [brain](#) development, and what they eat affects focus and cognitive skills," says [psychiatrist](#) Drew Ramsey, MD, co-author of *The Happiness Diet* and *Fifty Shades of Kale*.

These 7 foods can help kids stay sharp and affect how their brains develop well into the future.

## 1. Eggs

The protein and nutrients in eggs help kids concentrate, says Los Angeles-based chef Beth Saltz, RD.

**How to Serve It:** Fold scrambled eggs into a whole-grain tortilla for a filling [breakfast](#) or late-afternoon snack. "The protein-carb combo tides kids over until the next meal with no sugar-induced energy crash," Saltz says. You can also try serving egg salad sandwiches or a few deviled eggs.

## 2. Greek Yogurt

Fat is important to [brain](#) health, says Laura Lagano, RD. A full-fat Greek yogurt (which has more protein than other yogurts) can help keep [brain](#) cells in good form for sending and receiving information.

**How to Serve It:** Pack Greek yogurt in a lunch with some fun mix-ins: cereal with at least 3 grams of fiber, and blueberries for a dose of [nutrients](#) called polyphenols. Dark [chocolate](#) chips are another option. They have polyphenols, too. These nutrients are thought to keep the mind sharp by hiking [blood](#) flow to the [brain](#).

## 3. Greens

Full of folate and vitamins, spinach and kale are linked to lower odds of getting [dementia](#) later in life. Kale is a super food, packed with antioxidants and other things that help new brain cells grow.

**How to Serve It:** For some kids, greens are a hard sell. So rather than serving a salad, you may want to try some different ideas:

- Whip spinach or kale into smoothies for snack time.
- Add spinach to omelets or lasagna.
- Make kale chips. Cut kale from stems/ribs, drizzle with olive oil and a bit of salt, and bake.

## 4. Fish

Fish is a good source of [vitamin D](#) and omega-3s, which protect the brain from declining mental skills and [memory loss](#). Salmon, tuna, and sardines are all rich in omega-3s.

"The more omega-3s we can get to the brain, the better it will function and the better kids will be able to focus," says Bonnie Taub-Dix, RD, author of *Read It Before You Eat It*.

**How to Serve It:** Grill it and offer your child a sauce for dipping, add fish to tacos, or make tuna sandwiches.

## 5. Nuts and Seeds

Packed with protein, essential fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals, nuts and seeds may boost mood and keep your nervous system in check.

**How to Serve It:**

- There's always peanut butter, or you can also buy or make sunflower seed butter. Sunflower seeds are rich in folate, [vitamin E](#), and [selenium](#), and safe for nut-free zones. If you can't get your kids to eat the seeds themselves, use the spread on whole-grain crackers or bread.
- Make pesto: Nuts combined with olive oil and dark leafy greens make a healthful and tasty sauce you can serve over whole-grain pasta.

## 6. Oatmeal

Protein- and fiber-rich oatmeal helps keep [heart](#) and brain [arteries](#) clear. In one study, kids who ate sweetened oatmeal did better on memory-related school tasks than those who ate a sugary cereal.

**How to Serve It:** Add [cinnamon](#). Compounds in the spice may protect brain cells, research shows.

## 7. Apples and Plums

Kids often crave sweets, especially when they're feeling sluggish. Apples and plums are lunchbox-friendly and contain quercetin, an antioxidant that may fight decline in mental skills.

**How to Serve It:** The good stuff is often in the [skin](#) of fruit, so buy organic, wash well, and put the fruit in a bowl for quick snacks.

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