Top 7 Brain Health Foods

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Poor nutrition is one of the leading risk factors for chronic disease, which accounts for 70% of all deaths in the United States.[1] This means that what you choose to eat has the potential to increase or decrease your risk of developing Alzheimer's, other forms of dementia, and overall cognitive decline. So what are the right foods to promote healthy brain function? To help guide you, we have compiled a list of some widely available, nutrient-rich brain foods you can buy in your local grocery store.

These foods can:

- Protect from brain damaging inflammation
- Nurture the gut to foster a healthier brain
- Reduce risk of diabetes, a leading risk factor for Alzheimer's
- Provide your brain with the nutrients it needs to thrive
- Improve cognitive function and mental health

If you want to learn more about these 7 brain foods and discover additional ways to prevent cognitive decline tune into Alzheimer's – The Science of Prevention.

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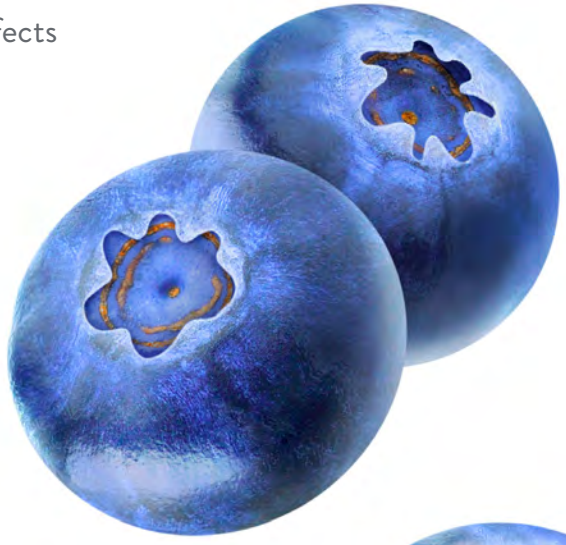
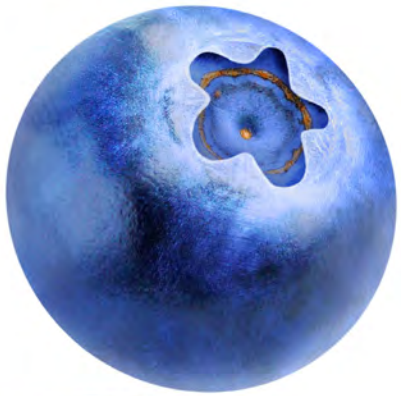
BLUEBERRIES

Blueberries are often praised for their powerful antioxidants. These unique antioxidants often referred to as flavonoids, have been shown to reduce the risk of cognitive decline by preventing age-related degenerative processes in the brain.[1] Research also indicates that increased blueberry intake may have beneficial effects on spatial learning and memory abilities.[1] Other studies have shown that eating blueberries can even reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes, which is known to be a major risk factor for Alzheimer's disease.[2]





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LEAFY GREEN VEGETABLES

Leafy green vegetables are among the most nutrient dense foods on the planet, packed full of brain-healthy vitamins and minerals. In addition, vegetables like cabbage, kale, and broccoli protect gut health by reducing inflammation in the bowel lining.[3] Inflammation is enemy #1 when it comes to brain health. This means it is crucial to reduce inflammation in order to keep your brain working optimally. Leafy vegetables also contain phytonutrients, which have a variety of health-promoting effects. They have been shown to protect against cancer and cardiovascular disease, assist detoxification and decrease inflammation throughout the body.[4]

2

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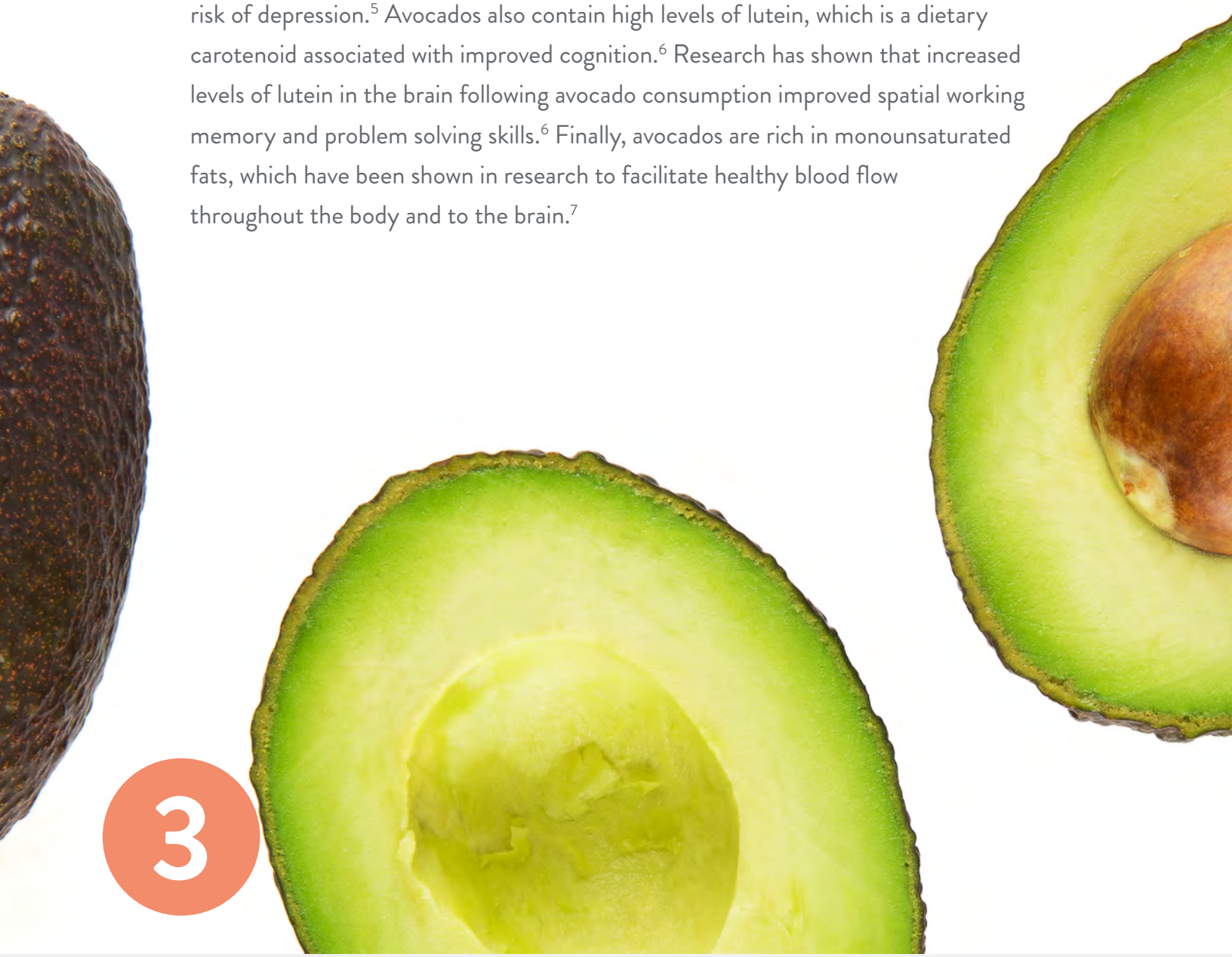
AVOCADO

Avocados are a power player in the world of cognitive health, as they contain an important compound known as folate. Folate is necessary for making neurotransmitters, promoting cellular detoxification, and ensuring proper nervous system development.[5] In recent studies, folate has also been shown to decrease the risk of depression.[5] Avocados also contain high levels of lutein, which is a dietary carotenoid associated with improved cognition.[6] Research has shown that increased levels of lutein in the brain following avocado consumption improved spatial working memory and problem solving skills.[6] Finally, avocados are rich in monounsaturated fats, which have been shown in research to facilitate healthy blood flow throughout the body and to the brain.[7]



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FERMENTED FOODS

Fermented foods such as kimchi, kefir (which can be plant-based), and sauerkraut are full of key enzymes and probiotics that are important for digestion and gut health. These fermented foods, containing billions of probiotic bacteria, may help to improve cognition, lead to clearer thinking, and improve mood.[8] Studies show that increased consumption of fermented food correlates with significant improvements in depression and anxiety.[8] Eating fermented foods not only appears to restore good bacteria in the gut and benefit your mental health, it may also improve immune function. Finally, the fermentation process itself may actually increase the vitamin content of these foods.

4

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PREBIOTIC FOODS

Prebiotic foods are one of the most underrated brain foods. These fiber rich foods act as food for your good gut bacteria, which in turn play a major role in brain health. That means more energy to fuel your brain! They are actually converted into short chain fatty acids by your gut bacteria, serving as a source of energy that ultimately fuels your brain while reducing inflammation.[10] Prebiotic foods include chicory root, Jerusalem artichokes, garlic, and onions. These each act as anti-inflammatory agents, promoting good gut health, supporting digestion and aiding in weight loss.[11]

5

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NUTS

Nuts are a brain-boosting powerhouse. These fantastic snacks contain an abundance of brain-healthy fat and protein. Nuts have been shown to protect brain health, improve cognitive performance in adults, and prevent age-related cognitive decline.[12] Additionally, they have been shown to provide a variety of other benefits. Almonds, for example, have also been shown to lower blood sugar levels by as much as 30%, as well as reduce inflammation in people with type 2 diabetes, a key risk factor for Alzheimer's.[13]

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COFFEE

Coffee is one of the most widely consumed beverages on the planet and in the United States almost 65% of people consume coffee on a regular basis.[14] In addition to being a key part of a morning routine, coffee also has surprising benefits for your brain! Research has shown that coffee is associated with a significant reduction in risk for Alzheimer's disease. In one such study, 3-5 cups of coffee per day was associated with a 65% reduced risk of dementia and Alzheimer's later in life.[15] But what is it about coffee that is good for the brain? Some research has shown that certain compounds found in coffee appear to protect the brain by inhibiting the accumulation of proteins associated with Alzheimer's disease. This neuroprotective effect was strongest in dark roast coffee compared to light and medium roast brews.[16] Coffee has also been linked to reduced risk of developing type 2 diabetes, one of the main risk factors for Alzheimer's.[17] In terms of its immediate effects on the brain, coffee consumption has the potential to improve memory performance.[18] Across the board, coffee appears to be an incredible addition to a healthy diet. One word of caution however: since coffee contains caffeine be sure to wrap up your coffee consumption by noon – 2pm to protect your sleep quality. If you don't do well with caffeine, then decaf coffee is totally okay - and you can also get great anti-Alzheimer's benefits. You can also drink plenty of caffeine free teas like hibiscus, chamomile, and ginger.

7

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BRAIN HEALTH SHOPPING LIST

- [ ] Coffee
- [ ] Blueberries
- [ ] Broccolli
- [ ] Kale
- [ ] Cabbage
- [ ] Spinach
- [ ] Avocado
- [ ] Active-Culture Yogurt (which can be plant-based)
- [ ] Kimchi
- [ ] Kefir (which can be plant-based)
- [ ] Kombucha
- [ ] Jerusalem Artichoke
- [ ] Garlic
- [ ] Onion
- [ ] Almonds
- [ ] Walnuts

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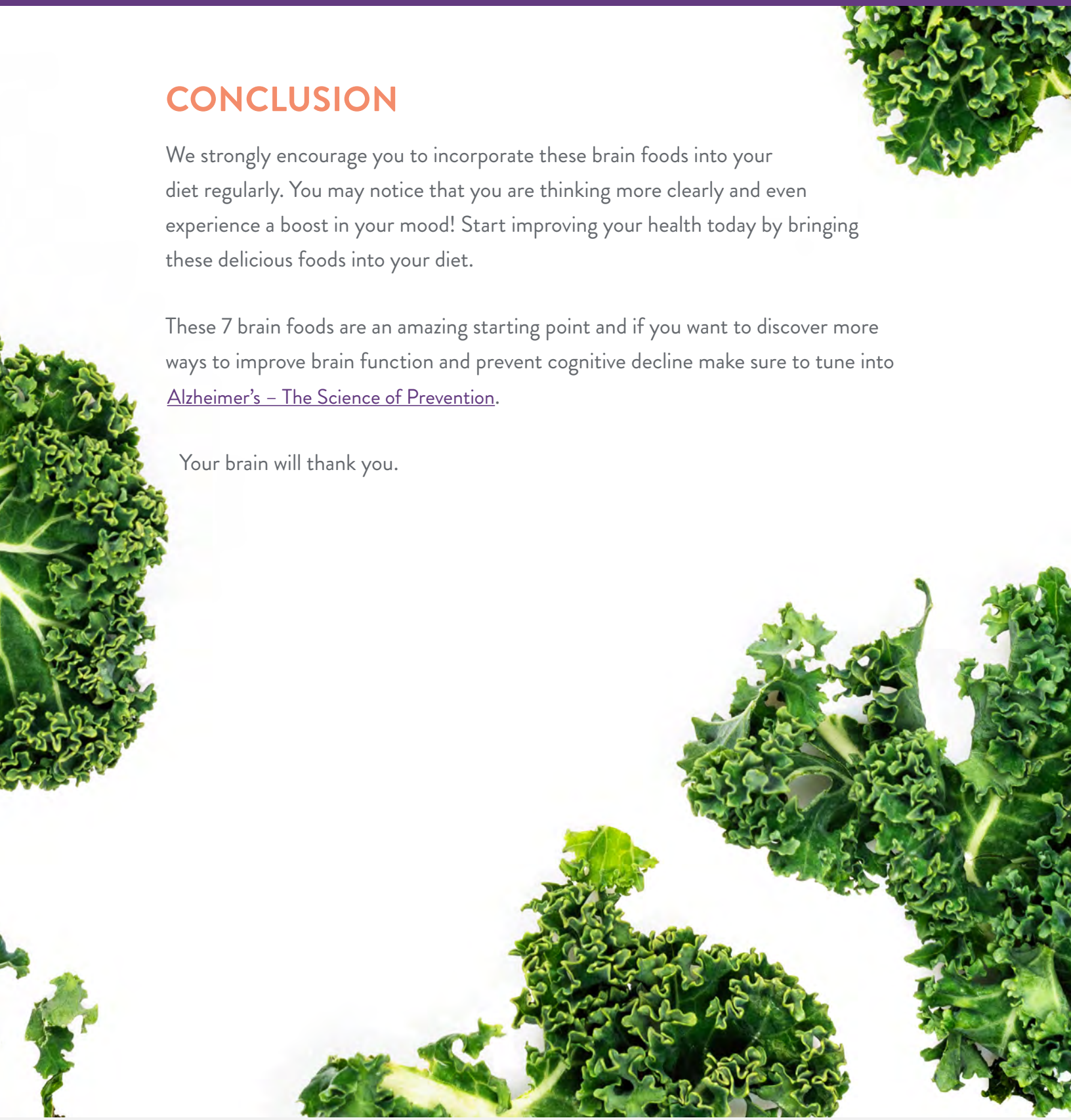
CONCLUSION

We strongly encourage you to incorporate these brain foods into your diet regularly. You may notice that you are thinking more clearly and even experience a boost in your mood! Start improving your health today by bringing these delicious foods into your diet.

These 7 brain foods are an amazing starting point and if you want to discover more ways to improve brain function and prevent cognitive decline make sure to tune into Alzheimer's – The Science of Prevention.

Your brain will thank you.



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Top 7 Brain Health Foods

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