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ASK THE EXPERT

What is Fresh at Farmers Markets?
by Robin Stahl, RD

We are fortunate that our grocery stores stock produce from faraway places all year long! However, that does not mean this produce is as fresh as we can get at farmers markets. Nothing beats local produce for freshness. Look for farmers markets to begin popping up in late spring. It helps to know what is in season locally before buying in order to ensure you are getting the best. Asparagus grows in Indiana in early spring, so do not expect to see this vegetable at farmers markets in August. If you see Brussels sprouts for sale in May, you are probably not getting local sprouts as they mature in late summer. Check out this calendar for complete information. marionswcd.org/wp-content/uploads/Indiana-Fruits-and-Vegetable-Harvest-Calendar.pdf

Can Helping Others Improve Our Emotional Health?
by Katie Thorne, Health Coach

A simple good deed brings a sense of community and boosts our emotional health. Recently, I had the opportunity to support a friend by walking their dog and cooking a meal for their family, as they are foster parents to a newborn. I felt happy that I could share my time and resources/skills with my friend. While I was cooking the meal for them, I was in a positive mood because I knew how much it would help them. In addition, I got some exercise while walking their dog! Whether it is cooking a meal or donating your time to a family or organization, supporting others boosts our own mood.

Psychology Today states that human connectivity and pro-sociality recharges our sense of relating to one another. This helps build meaningful relationships, helps regulate our emotions, and lowers depression.

As we help others in times of need, we, in turn, help ourselves regulate our emotions.
Fitness and the Brain

by Chris Garrity MS, ACE Certified Personal Trainer

“Exercise is the single best thing you can do for your brain in terms of mood, memory, and learning.”

Dr. John Ratey, author of Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain

With all the benefits of exercise, one of the most captivating benefits is what happens to our brain with regular activity. It transforms the structures and alters brain chemicals in such a positive way it may as well be called medicine itself. Ultimately, longer life with greater quality is the result.

**Exercise boosts brain health by:**
- Improving focus and concentration
- Raising energy levels and enhancing reaction time
- Decreasing feelings of anxiety and depression
- Promoting growth of neurons (brain cells)
- Protecting against aging and neuron degeneration

At least 30 minutes of accumulated aerobic activity at a moderate intensity most days of the week is recommended. Accumulated means several bouts of exercise or physical activity can be performed throughout the day to reap the same benefits. Even 10 minutes of activity has benefits. This activity includes any physical movement that keeps the heart pumping and boosting oxygen to all the cells of the body, especially the brain. Walking, dancing, sweeping, raking, biking, and playing can all be included as long as it’s something you enjoy and helps you feel better or more productive. If you have a glow on your face with a little perspiration you know you are doing good for your brain.

For more insights, see the TED talk by Wendy Suzuki on the brain changing benefits of exercise.  [Ted talk]

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**TED talk:** [Wendy Suzuki: The brain-changing benefits of exercise]
The MIND diet takes two proven diets – the DASH and Mediterranean – and zeros in on the foods that specifically improve brain health. The diet, which stands for Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay, was created to help slow cognitive decline with age and reduce the incidence of Alzheimer’s disease.

A 2015 study found the MIND diet lowered Alzheimer’s risk by 35% for those people that followed it moderately well and up to 53% for those that adhered to it religiously. The antioxidants and nutrients these foods deliver reduce the type of oxidative stress and inflammation that damages brain cells.

### What to Eat

- **Dark green leafy vegetables:** >1 serving daily (1 cup raw or ½ cup cooked) of spinach, kale, collard greens, Swiss chard, arugula, or romaine lettuce
- **Other vegetables:** >1 serving daily (½ cup)
- **Nuts:** 5 servings weekly (1 oz each) of nuts or nut butter
- **Berries:** >5 servings per week (½ cup each) of blackberries, strawberries, blueberries, or raspberries
- **Beans/legumes:** >3 servings per week (½ cup each) of beans, chickpeas, or lentils
- **Whole grains:** 3 servings per day (½ cup or 1 slice each) of whole grain bread and pasta, brown rice, quinoa, wild rice, oats, barley, or bulgur
- **Fish:** >1 serving per week (3-5 oz). Good choices include salmon, tuna, tilapia, cod, mahi-mahi, and halibut
- **Poultry:** >2 servings per week (3-5 oz each) of skinless chicken or turkey breast
- **Extra Virgin Olive Oil:** Two tablespoons per day

### What to Limit

- **Red meat/processed meat:** <3 servings per week (3-5 oz each) of beef, ham, hot dogs, sausage, bacon, roast beef or salami
- **Butter and stick margarines:** <1 teaspoon per day
- **Regular (full fat) cheese:** <2 oz per week
- **Pastries and other sweets:** <4 servings per week
- **Fried and fast foods:** <1 meal per week from fast food, or one serving of fried food

While several genes can increase Alzheimer’s risk, adopting habits that reduce these risk factors can affect whether these genes become activated. Lifestyle factors are the best bet for reducing Alzheimer’s risk at this time.

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Recipe from The Real Food Dietitians

### SUMMER PASTA SALAD WITH CHICKEN AND BERRIES

6 oz. pasta, cooked and cooled
2 cups loosely packed baby spinach leaves
½ cups berries of choice
2 green onions, thinly sliced
½ cup red onion, diced
2 cups cooked chicken, diced and cooled
½ cup sliced almonds, toasted
¼ cup dried cranberries
3 tbsp fresh basil, chopped

**For the dressing:**
½ cup avocado oil mayonnaise
¼ cup apple cider vinegar
2 tbsp lemon juice
2 tbsp honey
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 tsp poppy seeds

**DIRECTIONS:**
1. In a large bowl, combine the salad ingredients.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the dressing ingredients.
3. Pour the dressing over the salad ingredients and toss gently to combine.

**Nutritional Information — Per Serving**

- Serving size: 1¼ cup — 8 servings
- Calories: 355
- Carbohydrate: 30g
- Protein: 15g
- Fat: 21g
- Fiber: 3g
- Sodium: 220mg

Recipe from The Real Food Dietitians
How is your stress level today? With the coronavirus pandemic, a world in constant chaos, and life in general, it is easy for a good day to go south in just a matter of minutes.

Let me introduce you to Grounding, which helps you take a break from the negative and “ground” you in the present moment. A popular technique is the 5-4-3-2-1 method. This shifts your focus from what is making you feel anxious to what’s currently happening around you. Plus, it can be done anytime, anywhere.

How to Practice Grounding—With Examples

**Sight:** Notice 5 things you see
- Look at every little detail of a photo on the wall
- Focus on a small object, ex: a coffee mug, identify every color and shape
- Look at the sky for clouds, birds, sunrises, or anything else
- Focus on a plant or flower and how it moves with the wind
- Observe a pet while they play or rest

**Touch:** Notice 4 things you feel
- Running water, alternating between warm and cold
- How your clothes or shoes feel
- Notice the difference between carpet and smooth flooring
- Focus on the texture of the furniture in your living or work

**Sounds:** Notice 3 things you hear
- A barking dog
- A clock ticking
- Birds singing

**Smells:** Notice 2 things you smell
- Soap/shampoo
- A scented candle

**Taste:** Notice 1 thing you taste
- A piece of gum
- Coffee

Begin grounding as soon you realize stress or anxiety increasing. Notice colors, textures, and patterns. Don’t make judgements. Say “The wall is brown,” instead of, “I don’t like brown.” And stay focused on the present.