



Brain Food

Eating more omega-3 fatty acids linked to greater brain volume

By Maggie Flynn | CTW FEATURES

Fish oil is one of the most touted ingredients for good brain health, and a new study might provide some clues about how the substance relates to the health of one of the human body's most mysterious organs.

Dr. William Harris, senior author of the study and scientist at Health Diagnostic Laboratory Inc., says that while there's a "tremendous" volume of omega-3 fatty acids in the brain, the levels found in living brain tissue are impossible to measure. That's why the study tested the level of fatty acids in red blood cells, since they provide a marker

that's easier for researchers to obtain.

The study, which was released in January, studied the levels of omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA in the red blood cells of over 1,000 women. Eight years after measuring the level of fatty acids in the red blood cells, MRI scans were used to measure the brain volumes of the subjects, whose average age was 78 at the time of the scanning.

Subjects who had higher levels of fatty acids in their red blood cells had a higher brain volume, and those with higher levels of omega-3s had a greater volume in the hippocampus. This part of the brain plays a key role in memory.

It's important to note that though the findings showed a correlation between high omega-3 levels and greater brain volume, it says nothing about the omega-3 levels of brain tissue.

However, there's no harm in maintaining high levels of omega-3s in the red blood cells. Harris says that the ideal level of EPA and DHA in red blood cells is "an index of over eight percent," and omega-3 fatty acids help reduce inflammation throughout the body from blood vessels to joints.

In any case, the correlation between omega-3 levels and brain health is a strong one.

"It's very safe to say that the higher the omega-3 in the red cell, the higher omega-3 is in the brain," Harris says.

Higher levels of omega-3 levels can be achieved through diet and supplements. Fish oil pills and consumption of oily fish such as salmon and sardines are good ways to boost omega-3 levels in the body.

According to James V. Pottala, who also authored and worked on the study, "the results suggest that the effect on brain volume is the equivalent of delaying the normal loss of brain cells that comes with aging by one to two years."

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Here's how to get their sickness out of your healthy path without being mean

By Matthew M. F. Miller | CTW FEATURES

It's that time of year again. Spring is around the corner, but there are still another four to six weeks of winter left - and the colds that come with it. That means that you invariably will be faced with someone hacking, sneezing and wheezing in your personal space. But how do you tell someone (politely) "Don't stand so close to

me?"

Jacqueline Whitmore, an etiquette expert and author of "Poised for Success: Mastering the Four Qualities that Distinguish Outstanding Professionals" (St. Martin's Press, 2011), tells you how.

1. Sitting next to someone on the plane who won't cover their mouth as they cough

Whitmore says you that instead of trying

to impart the basic rule of "cover your mouth when you cough," it's more productive to ask the flight attendant if you can move seats. To avoid offending your sick plane mate, Whitmore suggests saying something like, "It sounds like you are really battling your cold, and I'm going to ask to sit in another seat."

2. You are standing in line at the grocery store and the guy ahead of you is having a

sneezing fit

In this situation, Whitmore says the advice is simple: "Just move away." "That's really the only thing you can do. To advise him or her to use a tissue or cover his or her mouth, you run the risk of offending someone. In this day and age it's like telling someone they are being rude on their cell phone," she says. But if you feel compelled to say something, Whitmore advises something along the lines of, "It sounds like you are getting over a cold, I'm just going to turn the other way."

3. You can't reschedule a meeting, presentation or conference during the height of your cold

Whitmore says she has been in a professional setting where her own sniffing has prompted people to give her tissues. Ideally, Whitmore says, you'll work in an environment where your boss will say, "You sound awful, take the afternoon off."

However, as Whitmore points out, many of us work in jobs where our commitments can't be rescheduled, regardless of the number of tissue boxes we've gone through that day. If you find yourself doped up on cold medicine at a big meeting, presentation or conference, Whitmore advises to be forthcoming about it (as if they couldn't already tell). "If I'm sick and can't reschedule a speaking engagement, I won't shake hands or get too close. That's how people infect the world," she says.

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