



5 STEPS TO *Better Brain Health*

YOUR QUICK-START ACTION SHEET FOR A
CALMER, CLEARER, BRIGHTER MIND + MOOD!



Hey there! I'm Cathy, your brain health coach and I'm so glad you've got your hands on this guide, because:

Did you know 30-50% of Alzheimer's cases are preventable through diet and lifestyle changes?

That means there are over 170,000 people in the UK alone that could be needlessly suffering!

Did you know that following specific ways of eating has been shown to improve our mind and mood and reduce depression by around 30%?

Approx 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year and worldwide we lose one person every 40 seconds to suicide.

What does this mean?

It means the way we eat, move and live on a daily basis has incredible power to influence the way our body and brain functions and the way our genes are expressed - for better or for worse.

Yep, some factors like age, sex, genetics are involved in our brain health which we can't change, but there is wonderful evidence that shows we have so much power at our fingertips - and at the end of our fork!

And that's exactly why I designed this guide.

Because no one wants to be a burden on their children and family.

No one wants to lose the ability to experience life with joy and positivity.

So the following pages will give you a clear, simple road map to the foods and practices that can nourish and protect your brain, with specific foods and even exactly how to get started whether you're a brain food beginner looking for the first step, or a pro ready to take it to the next level. The steps are simple, and don't involve expensive supplements or exotic foods. You can find everything you need at your local supermarket!

I know you'll find the information in this guide useful, but remember: knowledge isn't power until it's applied. You've gotta take action on the information you're going to learn in the coming pages to see the benefits and no one else can do that for you! Start small, start simple and just start!

Psst...you know that 'taking action' thing?! Need help?

Are you always falling off the wagon or find yourself lacking willpower and motivation to stay consistent? Oh you are NOT alone my friend! But I've gotta break it to you: it's not your willpower that's the problem, it's HOW you're going about making changes - your system!

If you're ready to take action, come and check out [The Nourished Brain Academy](https://cathywilliams.co.uk/academy).

It's the only overwhelm free online coaching academy to help you rewire your brain and build a more brain healthy life one habit at a time. You'll finally be able to enjoy a calmer, clearer and brighter mind and mood and nourish and protect your brain from dementia, Alzheimer's depression and anxiety, without burning yourself out in the process!

cathywilliams.co.uk/academy



HEALTHY *fats*



WHY?

Despite what flawed research 70s would have you think - the brain and body loves fats! Some of these fats are “essential” meaning the body cannot make them - it HAS to get them from food. The brain is made up of 60% fat, and a large portion of those fats are DHA, so if our diet is lacking, so is our brain!

These fats are anti-inflammatory and important for the structure and function of every cell in the body, plus some key nutrients such as Vitamin A, D, E and K are fat soluble - meaning they need fat to be absorbed.

THE SCIENCE

Research shows that those who ate oily fish just 1x a week had up to 60% reduction in Alzheimer's risk compared to those who ate fish rarely or never^{ref}.

The Mediterranean way of eating is heavily based on olive oil, fish and nuts and has shown to provide a 30% reduced risk of depression^{ref}.

Vitamin D deficiency has been strongly linked to mental health conditions and cognitive decline^{ef}.

WHAT?

Superstar brain-healthy fats include the Omega 3's DHA and EPA as well as Mono-unsaturated fatty acids (MUFAs). Get these from oil fish like Salmon and Mackerel, plus fatty plant foods like olives, avocados, coconuts and nuts.

HOW?

Start to add:	Level up like a pro:
• Add any sort of fish you like to your diet. Aim for 1-2x a fortnight to start. • Add a small handful of nuts or nut butter each week • Replace seed oils like canola, rapeseed and sunflower oil with olive oil and coconut oil instead.	• Prioritise oily fish like Salmon, Sardines, Mackerel and Herring. • Increase fish to at least 1x a week. • Choose fresh, wild-caught fish where possible over farmed or canned • Choose organic nuts and seeds • Try out new varieties of nuts and seeds for as much variety across the week as possible • Level up peanut butter to almond, cashew and other nut butters



EAT MORE *plants*



WHY?

A diet centered heavily on whole plant foods has repeatedly been correlated with better brain health and lower chronic disease. The non-starchy vegetables like leafy greens, mushrooms, bean sprouts, asparagus, broccoli etc are rich in essential brain nutrients like folate, magnesium, calcium, Vitamin K and so much more.

You're not just eating for you - you're eating for 100 trillion! Our food doesn't only need to nourish us, but nourish the host of organisms living in our gut. These guys rely on us to feed them and in return they produce a bunch of health-promoting substances and benefits, like butyrate - a Short Chain Fatty Acid with beneficial brain effects.

Along with the different colour pigments in foods and spices comes a wide variety of nutrients and antioxidants which all have slightly different beneficial actions in our body. Anthocyanins found in red/blue/purple foods (like blueberries) are brilliant for our brain! Spices help to reduce inflammation and oxidation that can cause damage to cells and neurons.

THE SCIENCE

A wide variety of gut bacteria is consistently correlated with better health outcomes and less chronic disease like diabetes and dementia^{[ref](#)}. The way to foster a wide variety of bacteria is to eat a wide variety of foods.

Anthocyanins have been shown to slow age-related degeneration in the brain^{[ref](#)} and other plant flavonols have been shown to correlate with reduced symptoms and risk of depression^{[ref](#)}

Butyrate (a short chain fatty acid) has been shown to protect brain cells from death, promote regeneration and growth of brain cells, improve memory and reduce inflammation^{[ref](#)}.

Plant based (not plant exclusive) diets like the Mediterranean diet is consistently shown to be the best for cardiovascular health, diabetes, depression, anxiety and dementia^{[ref](#)}, ^{[ref](#)}

WHAT?

Get out of your comfort zone! Explore new foods and avoid cutting out foods or food groups unless necessary.

Increase your intake of whole plant foods each week and try to ditch the beige and eat the rainbow. Prioritise the non-starchy vegetables at every meal.

Don't forget the blues and purples and consider berries a super-brain-food!

HOW?

Start to add:	Level up like a pro:
• Add 1 new type of vegetable per week - have fun with experimenting! • Start experimenting with and adding more herbs and spices to your meals	• Try to get all 6 colour groups into your meals every day, or 20+ foods per week. • <i>Ensure half of each plate is non-starchy vegetables</i> • Level up to organic vegetables if you're eating a high volume to avoid unnecessary toxins



NOURISH

your gut



WHY?

The health of our gut is strongly tied to the health of our brain through the absorption of crucial nutrients, regulating our immune system, influencing our nervous system, producing neurotransmitters and the effects of our gut bacterial balance.

Certain ratios of gut bacteria can lead to inflammation and reduced digestion which impacts our brain structure and function. Inflammation in the brain has been linked to dementia, Alzheimer's depression and anxiety. The gut constantly sends messages to the nervous system and the brain, and a healthy gut can help improve our mental and cognitive function.

THE SCIENCE

The gut sends messages to the brain regularly and alterations in this communication due to changes in gut health has been linked to chronic diseases like diabetes, obesity and dementia^{[ref](#)}

Many studies have found positive results of probiotics on measures of depressive symptoms; however, the strain of probiotic, the dosing, and duration of treatment varied^{[ref](#)}

Obesity, insulin resistance, fatty liver disease, and low-grade peripheral inflammation are more prevalent in patients with low diversity in the gut microbiome than they are in patients with high diversity^{[ref](#)}

WHAT?

Fermented foods carry probiotic species as they're responsible for the fermentation process. Kefir, tempeh, kombucha, sauerkraut and kimchi are fermented foods.

Be aware of any food intolerances and avoid foods that cause you upset.

As above, a wide variety of plant foods nourish a healthy microbiome, so aim for 20+ a week

HOW?

Start to add:	Level up like a pro:
• Add plain, unsweetened yoghurt or kefir to your diet a few times a week if you can handle dairy • If you like sauerkraut or pickles, start adding some to your meals. • Add prebiotic foods (leeks, onions, garlic, artichoke) these contain the fibres that feed beneficial bacteria • Add a probiotic supplement as directed by a practitioner	• Try goat's or sheep kefir as an alternative to cow's • Choose organic options • Widen the variety of your fermented foods i.e. kimchi etc • Work up to including a fermented option daily • Increase the variety of foods in your diet - aim for 20+ a week



SMARTER carbs



WHY?

Western diets are heavy on the refined, processed carbs like breads, pastas, pastries, muffins, cakes and sugars. These processed carbs are stripped of all their fibre in the name of a light, fluffy texture. And we know by now that fibre fuels a healthy gut! This also means they spike our blood sugar faster and keep insulin higher for longer which puts us at greater risk of obesity, diabetes and dementia. More complex carbohydrates like legumes like as well as whole grains and pseudograins (they're like grains but actually seeds!) such as etc are all much richer in fibre, minerals and nutrients, plus often higher in protein which is essential for healthy neurotransmitters. Diets that include these slower absorbed, smarter carbohydrate choices are top amongst the heart and brain healthy diets.

THE SCIENCE

Gluten may cause gut and mood issues in many (not just in coeliac disease), so including mostly non-gluten grains is a good practice.[ref](#) [ref](#)

Diets based on beans, legumes, whole grains and pseudograins, like the Mediterranean diet and the [MIND Diet](#) are consistently ranked best for brain health and more[ref](#)

WHAT?

Go whole over processed. Rather than pastas and packaged foods made from flour, eat the grains in their whole form. Vary your choices for a range of nutrients and move away from a heavily wheat based diet.

Legumes: chickpeas, lentils and beans

Pseudograins: quinoa, buckwheat, amaranth, wild rice

Whole Grains: steel cut oats, brown rice, spelt, rye

HOW?

Start to add:	Level up like a pro:
• Level-up 'white' foods for wholegrain pastas, brown rice or whole grain bread. • Go half and half to ease into it • Experiment by adding 1 serve of smarter carbs in per week. Try quinoa or cauliflower rice with curry, add buckwheat to salads.	• Switch out pastas and rice for a variety of vegetables, legumes, lentils, and pseudograins like quinoa, amaranth, buckwheat etc. i.e. zucchini noodles or spaghetti squash instead of pasta. Sweet potato toast instead of bread. • Work up to smarter, slower carb choices every day



NARROW

the window



WHY?

We now have constant access to food in a way we've never had before. Periods of fasting were common in our ancestors and are present in traditional cultures as well. When we're always eating, our body is always in a digesting state and our insulin (the hormone that shuffles glucose into our cells) is always working. High insulin can lead to insulin resistance, weight gain and diabetes. Insulin resistance is indicated as a precursor to many cases of Alzheimer's and those with diabetes have an increased risk of dementia and depression. Keeping out weight, blood sugar and insulin healthy is crucial. Periods of fasting allow for certain processes to occur which break down damaged cells and clear out toxins. When we're always eating, these are inhibited.

THE SCIENCE

Studies link the act of fasting with increased autophagy which has a neuroprotective effect as it maintains healthier cells, encourages regeneration and reduces degeneration of brain and nerve cells^{ref}

Intermittent fasting of varying patterns has shown ability to reduce insulin resistance and diabetes, change gene expression, promote weight loss, reduce inflammation and improve heart and brain health^{ref}

WHAT?

It's not about eating less, but about changing the times in which you eat. "Squish up" your food intake into a shorter "eating window" and extend your overnight fast. Do it SLOWLY! You may like to consider guided extended fasts of 24+ hours also. Please check with a doctor if you have any medical conditions or are on medication, and use a practitioner to guide you.

HOW?

Start to add:	Level up like a pro:
• Work towards finishing eating 2-3 hours before you head to bed • Delay breakfast by an hour	• Aim for 12 hours between your last bite at night and your first in the morning • Aim to finish eating 3 hours before you hit your bed • Experiment with some intermittent fasting (under the guidance of a professional)

Here's to building healthier happier brains with these 5 simple steps!

I'd love to connect with you over on Facebook + Instagram for more brain health goodness, or drop me an email if you've got questions about this guide!



