

# Recipe for a Strong Mind



## Basic ingredients

Food doesn't just feed the body, it also feeds the mind. Poor eating habits can change how your brain works.

Even though no one knows exactly which foods help your mental health the most, you can come out a winner and boost your energy, mood and overall wellness by sticking to a healthy diet.

Healthy eating can give you many rewards, including:

- Boosting your energy
- Giving fuel for your mind
- Positively influencing mood-related body chemicals
- Acting against the impact of stress on your body
- Lowering your chances of getting certain diseases

### What is a healthy diet?

The word diet does not mean boring, or hard. A good diet should include food you enjoy. The key is eating all kinds of food, serving the right size portions, and cooking food in a healthy way. Sometimes just a few changes can mean a big reward in both physical and emotional health.

Balance is the key to eating well. Your daily food should include fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fat-free or low-fat milk products, lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts. The U.S. Department of Agriculture also suggests a diet low in saturated fats, trans fat, cholesterol, salt and sugars.



**BlueCross BlueShield of Illinois**

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## Mental health tidbits to chew on:

### Emotional eating.

Before you eat that donut or ice cream, ask yourself if you're really hungry. People often use food as a way to deal with emotional problems. Finding out what your food means to you is the first step in taking control of your eating.

### Don't skip meals.

Eating meals at set times helps give your brain and body a steady fuel source.

### Balance for your body and your brain.

Your mind works best when it's fed with all kinds of food.

### Eat for fitness.

Eat to be healthy, not to fit into a certain outfit.

### Streamline the blood flow to your brain.

Your brain needs a strong blood flow to bring oxygen and food to your brain.

### Control your portions. Here are some guidelines to help you determine what a serving is.

- 1 bagel = a hockey puck
- 1 cup of fruit, vegetables, pasta or rice = a small fist
- 3 ounces of cooked meat, poultry or fish = a deck of cards
- 1 ounce of cheese = 4 dice
- 1 teaspoon of margarine or butter = a thumb tip
- 1 serving of snack foods (pretzels, chips) = a small handful
- 1 muffin = a large egg
- 2 tbsp. peanut butter = a golf ball
- 1 baked potato = a computer mouse

If you are taking medicines, talk to your pharmacist about any foods that you should avoid. Certain foods have interactions with drugs often prescribed for mental illness.