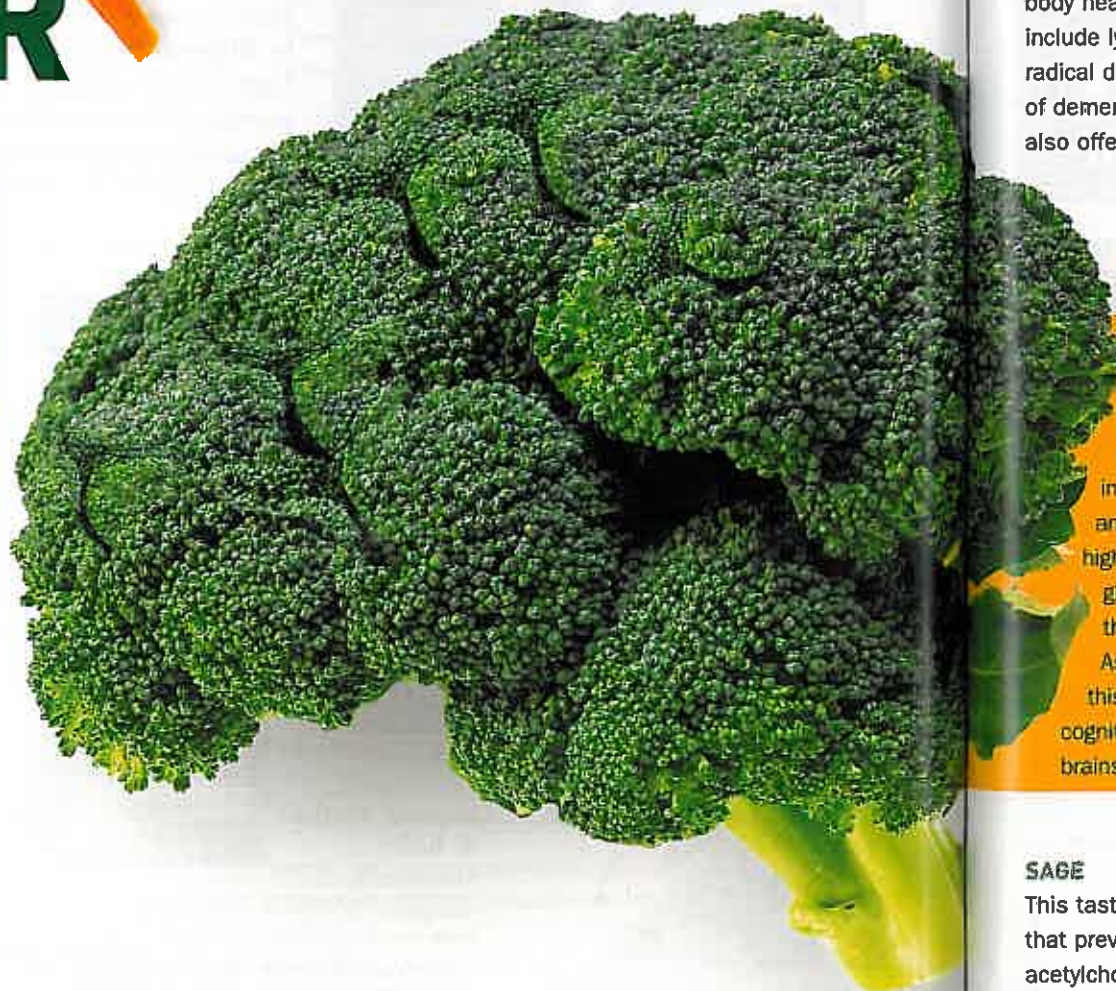


# BUDGET-FRIENDLY FOOD FOR BRAIN POWER

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WHILE OUR DIETS HAVE CLEAR EFFECTS ON OUR PHYSICAL HEALTH – LIKE OUR susceptibility to obesity, heart disease, diabetes and some cancers – they play a crucial role in brain health as well. The foods we consume influence our moods, our cravings and our cognitive abilities – even our memory. The effects of food on brain health are most significant when observing their absence: a poor diet can increase our risk of mental disorders and neuro-degenerative diseases. For example, sugar can increase stress hormones, and can be particularly detrimental to teenagers in the triggering of anxiety and depression during crucial brain development. Other studies have shown that people in their 60s who are overweight or obese have significantly smaller hippocampi than those of healthy weights. Whilst the hippocampus typically shrinks with age, the effects are aggravated with obesity, and greater degrees of

shrinking are associated with dementia and memory problems.

For those of us with regular budgets trying to keep on top of what our bodies need – the typical superfoods recommended for brain health can seem out of reach. Blueberries, wild salmon and avocados simply aren't realistic as daily food sources, so here are some more affordable options that are just as effective at delivering a brain boost!



## SAGE

This tasty herb contains compounds that prevent the breakdown of acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter involved in learning and memory. Season your fish and poultry dishes with sage, and reap the brain-enhancing benefits.

## BROCCOLI

This cruciferous veggie is a good source of vitamin K, recognized for its power to improve cognitive function and brainpower. It is also high in compounds called glucosinolates, which help slow the breakdown of acetylcholine. As mentioned before, we need this neurotransmitter to enhance cognitive performance and keep our brains and our memories sharp.

## TOMATOES

While there are a variety of powerful antioxidants to assist in brain and body health, tomatoes make an affordable and effective staple. They include lycopene, a powerful antioxidant that helps protect against free radical damage to cells – particularly that which occurs in the development of dementia and Alzheimer's. Unlike many antioxidants, cooked tomatoes also offer even more absorption.



## BROWN RICE

Our brains – and the rest of our bodies, for that matter – cannot run without energy. This energy takes the form of glucose, and opting for lower GI, wholegrain versions will keep the supply to the brain steady and consistent. Opt for the brown or wholegrain versions of carbohydrates – brown rice, for example, still contains its nutrient-rich bran and germ for a more sustainable release of energy.



## OILY FISH

Fish is the classic brain food: it is rich in oil and fortified with Omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential in brain function and development. In particular, the Omega-3s found in fish offer both EPA and DHA, which together can lower our risk of stroke and dementia while helping enhance memory and manage our moods. Salmon, trout, mackerel and herring are great oily fish options, but sardines are by far the most affordable.



## EGGS

Don't toss those yolks! They are rich in choline – a B vitamin-like nutrient that is used to make acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter thought to be important for maintaining memory and communication among brain cells. Eggs also contain vitamin B12, which is known to reduce a harmful compound called homocysteine, associated with increased risk of stroke, cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease.

## NUTS

While walnuts are the brain health crowd-pleaser, you are still going to reap the cognitive-enhancing benefits of nuts in regulars like almonds, cashews and even peanuts. Their power comes from their vitamin E content, which helps protect fatty brain cell membranes from oxidation – particularly effective in the elderly. ☑

