

Powerful Endorphins

Endorphins are a type of hormone that reduce the sensation of pain and affect emotions. Discovered some years ago by a scientist called Candace Pert, endorphins are very powerful drugs....they are much better at pain relief than anything we can synthetically manufacture. They are produced in your body by the pituitary gland and the hypothalamus during pain, excitement and exercise. They serve as your body's "natural pain relievers" and produce analgesic effects and an overall sense of well-being.

The great thing about endorphins is that we can produce them at will. One of the easiest ways to produce endorphins is through exercise. Endorphins are released during long, continuous workouts, when the level of intensity is between moderate and high, and breathing is difficult. This also corresponds with the time that muscles use up their stored glycogen, or stored carbohydrate that is used during exercise for energy.

Many runners will say they are addicted to running because of the "runner's high" that they experience. This feeling is actually the result of the production of endorphins that give you that relaxed, energized and powerful feeling.

Other people will say they get an endorphin rush during other types of activities, such as hang gliding, propelling or sky jumping. The term "endorphin rush" typically refers to feelings of exhilaration that are associated with doing something fun, but can also be experienced in periods of pain, danger or stress, which allows the person to push their body beyond physical limits despite pain. Therefore during exercise it is important to recognize your physical limits to prevent injury.

High concentrations of endorphins in the brain produce a sense of euphoria, enhance pleasure, reduce anxiety, as well as potentially help you make healthier food choices.

To boost your endorphin levels, engage in regular physical activity throughout the week, eat a healthy diet, get plenty of rest and...

LAUGH!

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Brain Foods

Throughout the year, and especially during final exams, we could all use a little extra brain power. Is it possible that the foods we eat could impact our ability to concentrate and think clearly? Some researchers think so. It's not only what foods we eat, but also how we eat that can make a difference. To boost your brain power, try the following:

- 1) Always start the day with breakfast
- 2) Eat every 3 to 5 hours
- 3) Adhere to the dietary guidelines for Americans by eating plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, lean protein, and wholesome whole grains;
- 4) Limit excessive caffeine;
- 5) Hydrate....consuming eight, 8 ounce glasses of water each day is still a reasonable rule of thumb for adequate hydration

In addition try a few of the following "brain foods" to enhance mental alertness and clarity:

- 1) A protein source associated with a great brain boost is FISH. Fish is rich in omega 3 fatty acids, which promote amazing brain power. Consuming more dietary omega 3 fatty acids is linked to slower mental decline and may play a vital role in enhancing memory, especially as we get older.
- 2) NUTS AND SEEDS are good sources of the antioxidant vitamin E, which is associated with less cognitive decline as you age.
- 3) DARK CHOCOLATE also has powerful antioxidant properties, and contains natural stimulants like caffeine, which can enhance focus and concentration. It has high content of flavanols that facilitate blood supply to the brain and enhance cognitive skills. Just remember, all foods in moderation. A one-ounce portion of dark chocolate is just enough to provide added health benefits without excessive calories, fat and sugar.
- 4) Berries, especially BLUEBERRIES. Not only do they taste delicious, but they are also full of natural antioxidants.
- 5) GREEN TEA contains catechines, as well as polyphenols, a type of antioxidant, that can help you mentally relax and enhance your overall memory.
- 6) EGGS contain a nutrient called choline that helps to boost memory.
- 7) TOMATOES contain lycopene, another amazing antioxidant.
- 8) BROCCOLI contains a powerhouse of nutrients, but especially Vitamin K, which is believed to enhance cognitive function.

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