

Strawberries are a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Improve Brain Health

By David Grotto, RD, LDN, author of *101 Foods That Could Save Your Life!*

Did you know that the antioxidants found in strawberries help protect and repair cells from damage that can speed up the aging process and contribute to cognitive decline? Strawberries are a great example of a super-smart fruit that is super-nutritious, super-delicious and rich in antioxidants. Just think *SMART* - (**S**trawberry's **M**arvelous **A**ntioxidants **R**epair **T**hinking)!

As our population ages, this type of thinking is more important than ever. Most people have experienced occasions where they can't recall someone's name at a high school reunion or can't remember where they placed the car keys. But chronic cognitive challenges, such as senile dementia and Alzheimer's disease, are on the rise. Dementia affects nearly 3.5 million Americans each year, with nearly 2.5 million of those cases being diagnosed as Alzheimer's disease. Interestingly enough, many of the same risk factors for heart disease, diabetes and cancer can also increase our risk of developing dementia: obesity, poor blood glucose control, high blood pressure and a high-sodium diet, excess alcohol, saturated and trans fats, and lack of adequate antioxidants. Following a healthy lifestyle that includes plenty of physical activity and adequate rest, a low sodium diet consisting of lean proteins, low fat dairy products, moderate alcohol and healthy fats, and plenty of antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables, may serve our brain just as well as the rest of the body.

Strawberries are rich in the antioxidant vitamin C which has been found to modify the risk of Alzheimer's disease. One cup (about eight) of strawberries contains 160 percent of the daily requirement of vitamin C. Strawberries also contain plant nutrients called flavonoids, which are thought to maintain proper functioning of brain neurons during the aging process since they reduce oxidative stress and inflammation that can damage neurons. They also enhance signaling between brain cells. All of this helps support cognitive function. And the good news is

that these brain-friendly plant chemicals slowly increase in concentration in the brain with regular consumption.

Adding fresh and frozen California strawberries to your diet is a smart and delicious thing to do. Thanks to California's ability to grow strawberries year-round, you won't have to give much thought to when you can find them - you can simply enjoy strawberries at peak freshness, anytime!

Enjoy and stay "smart"-healthy! - *David Grotto*

For references on the health benefits of strawberries and delicious "thought-provoking" recipes, visit www.calstrawberry.com.

References:

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