Brain Food
By Nicole Neal, Early Childhood Health Specialist

Your child’s brain is growing at a very rapid rate, and she/he is soaking up everything around her. In order to keep your happy little sponge going, they need to get the vitamins and nutrients that aren’t found in jelly, French fries, and mac-n-cheese.

It’s important to promote your little one’s ability to learn. Filling his/her belly with the right ingredients is important for your rapidly growing child, it also ensures her brain is getting the right stuff to keep up!

Top 10 Brain Foods for Children

Salmon/ Fish
Fatty fish like salmon are an excellent source of the omega-3 fatty acids DHA and EPA -both good for brain growth and function

Eggs
Eggs are well-known as a great protein source -- but the egg yolks are also packed with choline, which helps memory development.

Whole Grains
Differing from white or quick bread that has tons of bad refined sugar, whole grains also have B-vitamins, which nourish a healthy nervous system.
Oats/Oatmeal

Oats are a very nutritious “grain for the brain”. Oats provide excellent energy or fuel for the brain that kids need first thing in the morning.

Berries

The more intense the color, the more nutrition in the berries. Berries boast high levels of antioxidants, especially vitamin C, and have shown improved memory with the extracts of blueberries and strawberries. But eat the real thing to get a more nutritious package.

Beans

Beans are special because they have energy from protein and complex carbs -- and fiber -- plus lots of vitamins and minerals. These are an excellent brain food since they keep a child's energy and thinking level at peak all afternoon if they enjoy them with lunch.

Colorful Veggies

Tomatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, carrots, spinach -- vegetables with rich, deep color are the best sources of antioxidants that keep brain cells strong and healthy.

Milk & Yogurt

Dairy foods are packed with protein and B-vitamins – good for growth of brain tissue, neurotransmitters, and enzymes. Milk and
yogurt also provide a bigger punch with both protein and carbohydrates - which is the source of energy for the brain loves!

**Lean Beef (or Meat Alternative)**

Iron is an essential mineral that helps kids stay energized and concentrate at school. Lean beef is one of the best absorbed sources of iron. For vegetarians, black bean and soy burgers are great iron-rich meatless options.

**Peanut Butter**

Peanuts and peanut butter are a good source of vitamin E, a valuable antioxidant that protects brain -- plus thiamin to help the brain and nervous system use glucose for energy.

To pre-register for City of Phoenix Birth to Five programs please call:

602-495-7050 for Early Head Start (ages birth to 3)
602-262-4040 for Head Start Preschool (ages 3 and 4)