

Power Your Brain with Protein in the Morning

By [Jenna Birch](#) , January 15, 2016

You've probably heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day and should not be skipped — probably thousands of times, in fact. However, your morning meal is a little more complex than simply eating anything. In order to boot up your brain in the morning, there's actually one macronutrient you shouldn't leave out, protein.

Our diets consist of three primary nutritional building blocks: carbohydrates, fats and protein. Carbohydrates are our the body's primary source of fuel, fats help the body absorb nutrients and cushion organs, and proteins assist in growth and repair.

Research reveals that protein is a key player in weight control, because it has a satiating effect in the brain. Notably, studies are also beginning to show that eating protein for breakfast may help you feel fuller throughout the day *and* curb cravings by lowering the levels of the hunger hormone, ghrelin, in the brain.

And that's not all protein does for your mind. When you take in foods with protein, the body breaks down those proteins into amino acids. Amino acids are the foundational elements of neurotransmitters, which act as chemical messengers in the brain. So by putting protein on your plate in the morning, you are making those amino acids more readily available for the brain to utilize, and you will be sharper at the start of your day.

Consider protein the essential element of your breakfast, selecting foods that tally up 10 to 20 grams of the macronutrient, any more is unnecessary. Here are some ideas to get you going:

- Omelet with 1 egg, 2 egg whites, spinach & tomato
- 8oz Greek yogurt with berries
- 1/2 cup cottage cheese with a drizzle of honey
- English muffin with 2 tablespoons of peanut or almond butter
- Whole wheat wrap with lean turkey breast, lettuce & tomato

- Smoothie with 6oz nonfat Greek yogurt, 1 tablespoon of almond butter & banana
- Smoothie with 1/2 cup cottage cheese, frozen banana, dash of vanilla extract & honey
- Poached egg on whole-wheat toast

It is best to stick with whole foods in the morning, for the purest sources of nutrients. With that said, if you are short on time and need to grab a breakfast bar, aim for a bar with at least 5 grams of fiber, 5 grams of protein and less than 5 grams of sugar. To kick up your protein quotient, add an 8oz glass of milk.

Sources:

<http://advances.nutrition.org/content/3/3/322.full>

<http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/97/4/677>

<http://www.mckinley.illinois.edu/handouts/macronutrients.htm>

<http://www.webmd.com/diet/the-best-of-the-bars>