

Power yourself to Perform

You need to fuel your body with the right foods at the right times to energise your system, improve your alertness and sustain you through long exams. The wrong food choices can make you feel sluggish, jittery, burned out and crash your energy levels. Exams are like mental marathons so endurance is the key. Use the following nutrition tips to help you perform at your best on exam day.

P – Preparation Start the day with a nutritious breakfast. Your brain needs the energy from food to work efficiently. You need to keep your mental focus on your exam and not on your hunger. The best breakfasts should include slow-release carbohydrates, such as **porridge oats, whole grain bread or low-sugar muesli**, as these provide slow-release energy. Add a protein food, such as milk, **0% fat yoghurt or eggs**, to keep you feeling full for longer, you can also add a **banana, berries or nuts & seeds**. If you really cannot stomach food, then try having a **healthy smoothie**.



E – Energy Levels

Eat at regular times throughout the day and avoid high sugary foods such as pastries, sweets, caffeine and fizzy drinks. These will give you energy highs and crashes. The aim is to keep your blood sugars and energy levels stable by eating a combination of wholegrain carbohydrates, proteins and healthy fats. **Example foods for lunch include wholegrain sandwich, jacket or sweet potatoes with tuna, baked beans or a protein filling. Wholegrain rice or pasta mixed with protein. Wholemeal roll/wrap with cold meat, fish, egg, cheese or peanut butter and salad. Omelette with cheese, ham, mushrooms or tomatoes.**

R – Re-hydrate

Drink a glass of water ideally with lemon at the start of the day. **Carry a bottle of water** around with you and take it into the exam. Limit your caffeine, fizzy or sugary drinks as this will lead to energy highs & lows. Dehydration can cause your brain to shut down, not work effectively & give you headaches. Aim to **drink at least 2 litres of water every day** to help you think faster, keep focused and give your brain energy to function.

F – Focus Fuels

Snack on brain boosting foods throughout the day such as **fresh & dried fruit, nuts & seeds**. Snacks such as **peanut butter on rice cakes or cottage cheese on celery sticks, cheese and oat cakes or crackers, toast and marmite or peanut butter, non-sugary popcorn, 0% fat yogurt, raw vegetables – carrots, avocado, peppers, tomatoes or a small amount of dark chocolate** are all good options.

O – Omega 3's –

Omega 3 has been shown to help brain function and increases concentration. It also helps to improve your immune system when your body and mind are stressed. The best source of Omega 3 is **oily fish** such as **mackerel, sardines, salmon & trout**. A great lunch would be **fish on wholemeal toast**. Other foods include **walnuts, chia seeds, spinach & eggs**. You could even take a supplement of **cod liver oil tablets**.

R – Re-think brain blockers

On exam day, stay away from foods made of **white flour, such as cookies, cereal bars, pastries, cakes and muffins**, which require added time and energy to digest. Also avoid foods that are high in refined sugar, such as **chocolates, desserts, and sweets** as these won't keep you stable during a long exam. **Avoid sugary, fizzy or energy drinks** and **limit your caffeine**, as it can increase your nervousness.

Don't have turkey before an exam as it contains L-tryptophan, an essential amino acid which makes you feel sleepy. **Avoid heavy carbohydrate meals** as these can make you feel sluggish if eaten in large quantities. **Eat lighter meals** making sure it is enough to feel satisfied but not so much as to feel full and don't try out foods that you haven't had before!

M – Macro-nutrients

Have a combination of protein, fats, and carbs at every meal on exam day. You need protein to provide amino acids that create dopamine and norepinephrine. These brain chemicals make you feel more alert, attentive, and energetic. You need complex carbs that turn into glucose which fuels your brain. Carbs also create serotonin which can help you feel calm and put you in a positive frame of mind about your test. Having some healthy fats can keep you feeling full longer and help stabilize your blood sugar levels.

Carbohydrates

Breads
Rice
Couscous
Cereals
Bran
Potatoes
Pasta
Oats
Cream of Wheat
Corn
English Muffins
Pancakes
Whole Wheat/
Whole Grains
Vegetables
Squash
Pumpkin
Berries
Fruits
Sugars

Proteins

Beans
Sprouted
Grains
Quinoa
Most Yogurts
Skim Milk
Peas

Chicken
Turkey
Egg Whites
Fish
Buffalo
Bison
Whey Protein
Turkey Bacon
Lean Beef
Low/Non-fat
cottage
cheese
Low/Non-fat
greek yogurt

Fats

Eggs
Salmon
Bacon
Chia Seeds
Cottage
Cheese
Whole Fat
Milk
Duck
Whole-Fat
Yogurt

Acocado
Nut Butters
Egg Yolks
Nuts
Oils
Olives
Flaxseed

Macro Cheat Sheet

MIGHTY MAGNESIUM

Magnesium is involved in over 1000 enzymatic reactions in the body. It's vitally important in providing our cells with energy

Green vegetables
Nuts
Pulses
Fish
Bananas

UP THE B'S

B vitamins are directly involved in creating energy at a cellular level & will give you an energy boost

Green vegetables
Asparagus / Spinach
Broccoli
Yoghurt
Chicken / Turkey / Salmon
Whole Grains / Brown rice
Almonds / Pecans
Eggs

Pre plan your meals during your exams so that you give your brains and bodies the best possible fuel for maximum efficiency and therefore greatest success.