

PROGRAM WORKBOOK

Optimizing Brain Health





Welcome

Optimizing Brain Health

This program is designed to help you achieve optimal brain health and support the prevention of brain diseases through nutrition and lifestyle.

You will learn how to implement a low-glycemic, mildly ketogenic, and anti-inflammatory diet plus how to support healthy mitochondria (your cell's powerhouse) in your body and brain. This is how we make energy and is key to healthy brain function.

This course covers:

- Brain health basics
- Key supportive nutrients to include in your diet
- How to support healthy blood sugar and insulin sensitivity
- How to reduce toxin exposure, which can contribute to brain dysfunction
- Recipes and tips on how to lead a brain-healthy lifestyle

As you watch the course videos, have your workbook handy. Be sure to make notes and plan your action steps each week.

This workbook is organized by session with key points, pro tips, recommended goals, and resources. You can go through the program at any pace, but we recommend 3–4 weeks so you have time to make changes that will stick.

What are you waiting for? Let's get started!

Participation in this program is completely voluntary. Nothing presented or stated shall be considered medical advice, but solely used for educational purposes. Any lifestyle and diet changes should be discussed with your primary care provider.

This program is not meant for anyone under the age of 18, anyone currently under the care of a physician for a serious medical condition, pregnant individuals, or those nursing or trying to conceive.



Brenda Navin is the founder and president of Launch My Health and is on a mission to make a difference with nutrition. She has over 20 years of experience in healthcare and is a registered dietitian. She truly believes food is medicine and can transform your health from the inside out.

Please be advised that all nutritional information in our recipes is evaluated using the information available at the time of writing. While information is based on recipes specific to Launch My Health, nutrient values and allergens in each food may vary due to your selected portion size, use of other condiments and seasonings, as well as growing conditions, product manufacturer formulations, or any substitutions. The information provided in our recipes is meant to be a guide. If you are concerned about specific food allergens or sensitivities, always check the specific ingredients listed and labels used on your products for allergen information before consuming. Launch My Health is not liable for any food reactions.

01

Welcome! Let's Talk Brain Health

Learn the basics about brain health and the key supportive nutrients you should include in your diet.

02

Key Protective Nutrients

Some key nutrients—called antioxidants—have the important job of neutralizing free radicals in your body.

03

Healthy Brain Diet

Low-glycemic carbohydrates and mildly ketogenic foods are key components of a healthy brain diet.

04

Reducing Toxic Burden

Let's talk about detoxification! You might think this is only about alcohol, but it's actually about much more.

05

Special Considerations

If you want to dive deeper into brain health beyond a mildly ketogenic diet, there are special considerations to address.



OPTIMIZING BRAIN HEALTH

Session One

Welcome! Let's Talk Brain Health

Classes featured: Welcome to Optimizing Brain Health, Let's Talk Brain Health

What I want to remember:

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Dementia and cognitive decline are not inevitable as you age. Even if you have a genetic predisposition for certain brain diseases, your “lifestyle,” including your diet, can impact whether your genes are turned on.
- Reducing inflammation and damage to our cells’ mitochondria is key to brain health and prevention of brain diseases.
- Controlling blood sugar is key in protecting the brain and preventing dementia, often referred to as Type 3 diabetes.
- Mitochondria are the powerhouses in your cells; they are responsible for your vitality and impact how you age.
- When mitochondria aren’t functioning well, we can feel fatigue, pain, and cognitive issues.

Facts from the pros to remember:

- One in two people over age 85 will develop dementia.
- The most common brain diseases are Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s.



HOMEWORK

Assignment

Track everything you eat and drink for three days. Don't worry about writing down exact amounts; the purpose is to make you aware of what you are eating.

Quick notes:

FOOD AND SYMPTOM TRACKING

Do you notice a symptom after eating? How do you feel? What time is it?

Day one

What did I eat and drink?

Symptoms

Day two

What did I eat and drink?

Symptoms

Day three

What did I eat and drink?

Symptoms

Want to track digitally? Check out these free tracking apps: My Fitness Pal, My Plate, Shopwell



OPTIMIZING BRAIN HEALTH

Session Two

Key Protective Nutrients

Classes featured: Key Protective Nutrients for Brain Health, Food Sources for Key Nutrients

My reflections:

What I want to remember:



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- We get energy from macronutrients (carbs, protein, and fat), but our mitochondria can't use them without micronutrients like antioxidants.
- Antioxidants protect your body against damage, like a premium coating on your car to protect against rust.
- Key protective nutrients are flavonoids, glutathione, and Omega-3 fatty acids, such as DHA.
- Recommended amount of DHA per day is:
 - › 1100mg for females
 - › 1300mg for males ages 19–50
 - › 1600mg per day for males age 51+
- DHA is essential—you need to get it from your diet.
- Glutathione acts like flypaper in your body. All the bad stuff sticks to it and exits the body through stool and urine.

Tips from the pros to remember:

- Work up to a goal of 10–12 servings of fruits and vegetables. Start where you are at, and add 1–2 servings per week.
- Try drinking green tea cold or adding it to smoothies.
- If fish is not your thing, try supplementing with Omega-3s, (**not Omega-6s**, these are pro-inflammatory).
- Focus on consuming foods that are precursors to glutathione, like cruciferous vegetables, bone broth, turmeric, or green tea, and getting adequate protein.



HOMEWORK

Assignment

Choose one or two of the following to focus on:

- I will eat cruciferous vegetables at least once per day.
- I will count the servings of plant foods I am currently eating and will consistently eat one more serving per day.
- I will eat fatty fish twice per week.
- I will plan to add in a food from the key nutrients foods list every day this week.

Quick notes:

CAULIFLOWER SMOOTHIE FORMULA

Instructions:

- Start by making the base. Then add your preferred additional ingredients.
- Put the rest of the ingredients in a blender and blend until your desired level of smoothness.
- Drink within 15 minutes for best consistency.

Pro tip: Add a scoop of your favorite protein powder for additional protein. For extra flavor add, nutmeg, cinnamon, cacao powder, clove, ginger, vanilla extract, unsweetened coconut, instant coffee, or a dash of salt.

Base

+

Sweetener

+

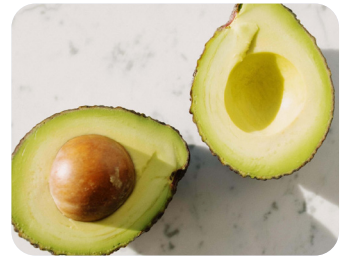
Fat



1 cup frozen
riced cauliflower



½ cup berries



⅓ cup avocado



½ cup–1 cup
unsweetened nut milk



1 tsp of agave, honey,
or maple syrup



2 Tbsp nut butter

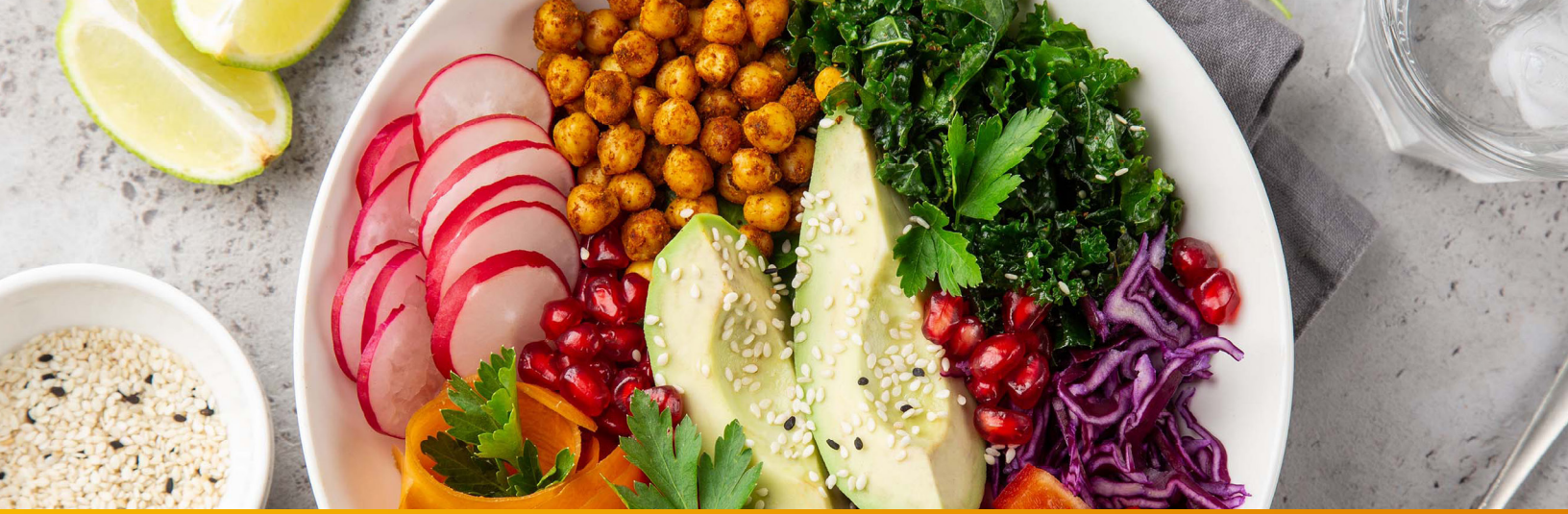
Quick nut milk tip: When shopping, pay attention to the nutrition label. Avoid added sugar and ingredients you can't pronounce or don't recognize. The ingredients should only read almonds and water.

KEY NUTRIENT FOOD LIST

Circle the foods you know you already like and plan them into your meals.

Put a check by the foods you are interested in trying.

Flavonoids	DHA (Docosahexaenoic Acid)	Glutathione supporting foods
½ cup per day is associated with a 20% reduction in symptoms of cognitive decline.	Omega-3 fatty acids help with heart and brain health.	Naturally found in our body, this substance helps build and repair tissue, but you need to consume foods that are precursors.
Anthocyanin-rich foods: Blackberries Blueberries Elderberries Grapes Onions Plums Radishes Raspberries Red cabbage Wine Flavone-rich foods: Celery Green chili peppers Oregano Parsley Peppermint Thyme	Algae Herring Mackerel Salmon Sardines Seaweed	Bok choy Broccoli Broccoli sprouts Brussels sprouts Cabbage Cauliflower Chicken or beef bone broth* Green tea Kale Protein-rich foods Turmeric *Contains N-acetyl, cysteine, or NAC



OPTIMIZING BRAIN HEALTH

Session Three

Healthy Brain Diet

Classes featured: Low-Glycemic Style of Eating, How to Eat a Low-Glycemic Diet

My reflections:

What I want to remember:



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- **The brain health diet** is lower in carbohydrates and mildly ketogenic, plus it's anti-inflammatory.
- **High blood sugars have been shown to increase oxidative stress in the body (aka rusting).**
If you constantly eat foods that spike your blood sugar, your body can become insulin resistant.
- **Insulin resistance** can lead to chronic inflammation and mitochondrial dysfunction, and it can even cause changes in the brain that lead to disease.
- **Focus on consuming low-glycemic foods** that have a score less than 55, and avoid high-glycemic foods with a score above 70.
- **Low-glycemic foods** reduce cravings, avoid the blood sugar rollercoaster, stabilize insulin levels, improve energy levels, support mitochondria, and optimize brain function.
- **Healthy brains thrive on healthy fats**, so focus on eating fats like avocado oil and olive oil.

Tips from the pros to remember:

- Include protein at every meal, and limit beans and legumes.
- Pair low-glycemic fruit with raw nuts or nut butter.
- Make your own salad dressing: 1 part vinegar + 3 parts oil + a dollop of an emulsifier (honey, dijon, molasses) + salt to taste + your favorite herbs and spices.
- Avoid processed ketogenic products because they often contain sugar alcohols and chemical additives you don't need.
- Store avocados in a brown bag to ripen them quickly.



HOMEWORK

Assignment

Choose one or two of the following to focus on:

- Drink 1–2 cups of green tea daily.
- Plan a healthy fat and protein at every meal and snack.
- Go through your cupboards, pantry, and refrigerator, and make a list of what you will get rid of.
- Swap out higher-glycemic carbohydrates for lower-glycemic carbohydrates.
- Begin to wean off processed and sugary beverages, soda, diet soda, sugary coffee and tea beverages, and sports drinks.

Quick notes:

GLYCEMIC INDEX AND FOOD

Glycemic Index (GI) is a ranking of carbohydrate foods on a scale from 0 to 100 according to how much they raise blood sugar (glucose) levels after eating.



Low GI: 1 to 55

Bran cereal
Chickpeas
Green vegetables
Kidney beans
Lentils
Most fruits
Raw carrots



Medium GI: 56 to 69

Bananas
Multigrain/oat bran/rye bread
Oat cereal
Raisins
Raw pineapple
Sweet corn



High GI: 70 to 100

Potatoes
White bread
White rice

Low-GI foods can:

- Reduce cravings and hunger
- Avoid the blood sugar rollercoaster and stabilize your insulin levels
- Improve your energy levels and support your mitochondria
- Support you in optimizing brain function and preventing neurological disease



THERAPEUTIC FOODS FOR BRAIN HEALTH

There are specific nutrients in foods that can help protect your brain health and function. We call these “therapeutic foods for brain health.” Try to eat a variety of foods from each category on this list to get the greatest benefit. Mix it up by swapping in different foods each week.

- Almonds
- Avocado
- Blueberries
- Broccoli
- Buffalo/beef (grass-fed)
- Cauliflower (all cruciferous veggies)
- Raspberries
- Strawberries (all berries)
- Coconut oil (virgin, organic)
- Green tea
- Olive oil (cold-pressed, extra virgin)
- Pomegranate seeds
- Salmon (Wild Alaskan)
- Seaweed
- Spinach

Superpower beverage

Green tea is truly a superpower drink—it supports glutathione and helps your body regulate blood sugar and insulin. Not a fan? Try drinking it cold, mixing it with lemon and herbs, or adding it to a smoothie.



OPTIMIZING BRAIN HEALTH

Session Four

Reducing Toxic Burden

Classes featured: Reducing Your Body's Toxic Burden

My reflections:

What I want to remember:



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

- Detoxification is your body's natural process of breaking down chemicals, compounds, hormones, and toxicants to make them less harmful and escort them out of your body.
- Toxins are in our environment and our food, plus we can make them in our body from an overabundance of yeast, fungi, bacteria, and even chronic stress and toxic people in our lives.
- Top toxins to watch out for in support of brain health are arsenic and mercury, plus phthalates, pesticides, and petrochemicals.
- Your genes impact whether or not you have a predisposition to get a brain disease, but your lifestyle plays a part in determining whether or not you actually develop a brain disease.

Tips from the pros to remember:

- Check out [EWG.org](https://www.ewg.org) to learn which fruits and vegetables to buy organic. This list is updated every year.
- Hydrate to assist your body in detoxifying naturally.
- Ditch plastic and replace with glass. Get rid of any coated cookware that is scratched.
- Never microwave in plastic or drink beverages in plastic containers that have been left in the sun.



HOMEWORK

Assignment

Choose one or two of the following to focus on:

- Go to [EWG.org](https://www.ewg.org) to browse and have fun.
- Make a list of priorities for reducing your toxin exposure.
- Go through your skincare, cosmetics, and cleaning products to see what you can ditch and how many chemicals you're exposed to.
- Sweat every day, either through exercise or sauna.
- Download and print the “dirty dozen” list.
- Drink your calculated fluid intake.

Quick notes:

4 FOOD RELATED TOXINS TO AVOID OR LIMIT

BPA

- BPA (bisphenol A) is a hormone-disrupting chemical.
- Use stainless steel, glass, or aluminum for water bottles and food storage.
- Use alternatives to plastic wrap.
- Choose BPA-free canned goods.
- Brew coffee in a glass French press instead of a percolator.
- Keep plastic out of the dishwasher, freezer, and microwave.

Chemical additives

- Aspartame and acesulfame potassium (found in products listed as “sugar-free,” “no sugar added,” and “diet”).
- Potassium bromate (found in bread and baked goods).
- Caramel coloring (found in precooked meats, soy sauce, and chocolate-flavored products).
- Carboxymethylcellulose (found in beer, cake icings, jellies, ice cream, and diet foods).

Food dyes

- Regular intake of food products with dyes have been linked to health problems such as cancer, allergies, headaches, and behavior disorders.
- Some synthetic food dyes are made from petroleum.
- The nutrition label may only say “artificial color,” or it may state the name of the synthetic color, for example “Yellow 5.”
- Look for products with natural dyes like fruit and vegetable extracts.

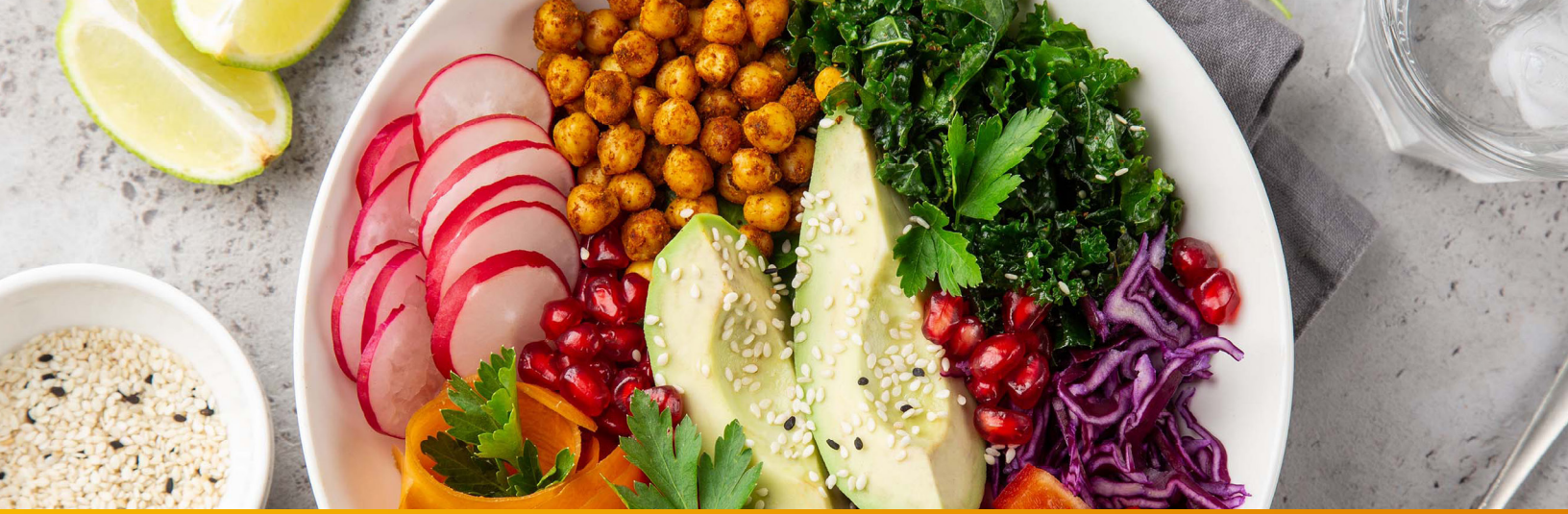
Heavy metals

- Even at low levels of exposure, heavy metals are associated with organ damage. Examples include mercury, arsenic, and lead.
- Avoid fish with the highest mercury levels, such as swordfish, bigeye tuna, shark, marlin, orange roughy, and King mackerel.
- Reduce the amount of arsenic in rice by rinsing dry rice multiple times and cooking it in a large water-to-rice ratio.

TOXINS IN YOUR PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

When using products with a label (cosmetics, household products, etc.), pay close attention to what's listed under ingredients.

Toxin	Where they are found
Bisphenol A	Plastic bottles, inner can linings, and chronic xenoestrogen exposure
Dioxin	Meat and surface water
Mercury	Fish and mercury dental fillings
Perfluorinated chemicals	Non-stick cooking and baking pans
Atrazine	Pesticides found in drinking water
Organophosphates	Pesticides found in baby food
Glycol ethers	Cleaning products, liquid soaps, and cosmetics
Phthalates	Plastic containers, cosmetics, toothbrushes, lotions, and cosmetics
Arsenic	Rice and some drinking water
Fire retardants	Furniture, car seats, changing table pads
Lead	Water and lead-based paints
Mold	Damp home or workplace
Glyphosate	Herbicide in farming



OPTIMIZING BRAIN HEALTH

Session Five

Special Considerations

Classes featured: Optimizing Brain Health Wrap-up, Optimizing Brain Health Special Considerations

My reflections:

What I want to remember:



KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- A therapeutic ketogenic diet may be beneficial for those who have a family history of ALS, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, brain tumors, or active disease.
- A true ketogenic diet moves the body from using sugar as fuel to using ketones from fat for fuel. This activates BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor) production.
- Intermittent fasting should be considered if you have genetic markers for Alzheimer's disease or history of Parkinson's disease. There are many types of intermittent fasting that your healthcare provider may recommend and that may be beneficial for a healthy metabolic function, including blood sugar and insulin levels.
- If you have genetic biomarkers or a family history and want to implement these types of diets, you should not attempt this on your own. You should meet with a registered dietitian that specializes in ketogenic/intermittent fasting and a provider specializing in functional medicine.

Tips from the pros to remember:

- Check out [IFM.org](https://ifm.org) for healthcare professionals specializing in functional medicine and these therapeutic diets.
- The Mito food plan from IFM is a great place to start before you meet with a healthcare provider and dive deeper into more strict options.
- People with diabetes, metabolic disorders, hypoglycemia, or medications that affect your blood sugar levels should not attempt intermittent fasting.

Action steps I will take:

- Check out [IMF.org](https://imf.org) to see if there are any providers in my area and learn more about my options.



Program Completion

Congratulations on completing the Optimizing Brain Health program!

You should have implemented a few strategies by now and be starting to notice changes in how you feel. Remember this is only the beginning of your journey. With your newfound knowledge, you have additional tools to get healthy, stay healthy, and support your brain health. Keep building on your healthy habits from the list of action steps.

Cheers to your health and wellbeing!

Want to continue learning?

Check out one of our other programs: Putting Out the Flame, Restore Gut Health, Optimizing Women's Hormones, Home Chef Pro, and Kids in the Kitchen.