According to scientists, brain disorders could outstrip heart disease as the leading cause of death and disability among Canadians in the next 20 years.

Increasing numbers of North American children, some as young as five or six years old, have been placed on powerful drugs, antidepressants, or amphetamine-family stimulants. Older adults are succumbing to Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia. The future of our society will be greatly influenced by how we respond to this crisis.

Losing our memories? Losing our minds?
Genetic research may offer clues to how the brain works, but it does little to offer immediate help on how to protect our brains and enhance our mental abilities. Environmental and nutritional influences as well as gastrointestinal health and immunity play a role in brain function, and these factors, especially nutrition, can be modified for better brain health.

Learning and behaviour
From fetal development through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, brain-critical nutrients influence academic or business performance, mood, and behaviour. The omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA (from fish oils) and the omega-6 fatty acid GLA (in evening primrose oil) play a critical role in brain development and function.
Many children and adults supplement their diets with a combination of fish oil (or an EPA/DHA concentrate) and evening primrose oil, which effectively improves alertness and concentration.

"Junk food and high-calorie snacks must be replaced with nutrient-dense meals and appropriate supplements."

Adequate iron, magnesium, calcium, and zinc; trace elements such as selenium and chromium; as well as sufficient B vitamins (thiamin and pyridoxine) can improve brain function, mood, and behaviour. Bioflavonoids in grapeseed and other natural antioxidants may assist brain performance.

Exposure to neurotoxins such as mercury and pesticides can damage the brain. Nutrients such as n-acetyl cysteine and l-glutamine, as well as milk thistle extract, and water-soluble fibre can help rid the body of neurotoxins.

**Nutritional brain foods**

You can find many helpful nutritional brain foods in products sold at your natural health store, which have been developed using the latest in functional medicine research. These natural health products promote a health-enhancing, natural approach to learning and may help prevent dementia and behavioural disturbances.

People with learning difficulties often suffer from food allergies or intolerances. Look for natural products with omega-3 and omega-6 essential fatty acid combinations, as well as brain-beneficial drink mixes containing low-allergy pea or rice protein and other nutrients. Such mixes can be a base for fruit smoothies that make learning easier and easier to swallow.

The brain needs intensive nutritional support. Junk food and high-calorie snacks must be replaced with nutrient-dense meals and appropriate supplements. Use well-researched natural health products as an excellent, drug-free way to stay mentally sharp and energetic throughout the day.

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