Food for Thought
Nutrition Tips for Keeping Your Brain Alert

Running out of steam? Staying up late and using coffee to get you through the day? Many students become overwhelmed and exhausted during the semester. What many don’t know is that nutrition plays a very important role in energy and mental power during times of stress.

Follow these simple rules to fuel your brain and to increase alertness:

Don’t skip meals. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Eating breakfast will start your engine and keep your energy stable all day. Be sure to fuel up in the morning, even if it’s just a small meal.

Eat small, frequent meals. This keeps your blood sugar levels and energy steady throughout the day.

Choose meals and snacks that emphasize protein. Protein-rich snacks keep energy on an even note. Try crackers and cheese, peanut butter, turkey slices, or even hummus. Yogurt and cottage cheese are good options, as well as grilled chicken breast. If choosing a protein bar, choose one that is low in sugar, and high in fiber and protein.

Don’t live on highly processed snack foods. Although convenient, these foods don’t provide you with the proper fuel you need to get you through the day.

Drink water. To best maintain your energy, stay hydrated. Start your day with a big glass of water and try to rehydrate often.

Avoid sugary foods and sweets. If you crave sweets, consider a food that has protein instead. Sugary foods provide only a short burst of energy, and then lead to a crash. That means less energy for the rest of the day.

Keep stocked with healthy snacks. Bear Necessities has all the healthy snacks you need. Keep them readily available. Oatmeal, high protein bars, smoothies, yogurt, cheese sticks, even popcorn offer a healthy alternative to sugary snacks.

Compiled by Cornell Dining Nutrition. For more information, visit www.dining.cornell.edu.