

Get smart about what you eat and you might actually improve your intelligence

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New research findings published online in *The FASEB Journal* provide more evidence that if we get smart about what we eat, our intelligence can improve. According to MIT scientists, dietary nutrients found in a wide range of foods from infant formula to eggs increase brain synapses and improve cognitive abilities.

"I hope human brains will, like those of experimental animals, respond to this kind of treatment by making more brain synapses and thus restoring cognitive abilities," said Richard Wurtman, MD, senior researcher on the project.

In the study, gerbils were given various combinations of three compounds needed for healthy brain membranes: choline, found in eggs; uridine monophosphate (UMP) found in beets; and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), found in fish oils. Other gerbils were given none of these to serve as a baseline. Then they were checked for cognitive changes four weeks later.

The scientists found that the gerbils given choline with UMP and/or DHA showed cognitive improvements in tasks thought to be relevant to gerbils, such as navigating mazes. After these tests were concluded, the researchers dissected the mouse brains for a biological cause for the improvement. They found biochemical evidence that there was more than the usual amount of brain synapse activity, which was consistent with behaviors indicating higher intelligence.

"Now that we know how to make gerbils smarter," said Gerald Weissmann, MD, Editor-in-Chief of *The FASEB Journal*, "it's not too far a stretch to hope that people's intelligence can also be improved. Quite frankly, this can't happen soon enough, as every environmentalist, advocate of evolution and war opponent will attest."

Source: Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

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