

Vitamins, Supplements & Sleep

Supporting your recovery after a brain injury

All of the following supplements and vitamins work together to reduce inflammation in your body, brain and eyes. They promote brain healing and nudge you toward a better recovery from brain injury. It takes most people a few months to notice a difference. Sometimes people only notice once they stop taking them and realize they felt better on them.

Tip: use pill organizers

Pick up 4 of the *large* week-long pill organizers from a dollar store. You can then set up a month at a time instead of opening every bottle daily.

Before you start

Check with your family doctor or pharmacist before starting any supplement, especially if you take prescription medication (including blood thinners), are pregnant or breastfeeding, or have kidney disease.

1 Supplements and vitamins

☐ Vitamin D3

Does not come from mushrooms

5,000 IU per day

Two capsules of 2,500 IU, or 5,000 IU all at once.

Vitamin D3 is an anti-inflammatory, helps with recovery from the brain injury, and can act as an antidepressant.

The optimum vitamin D3 **blood** level is 125 to 175 nmol/L (50 ng/mL in the USA = 125 nmol/L in Canada). This can be checked with a blood test.

Vitamin D3 does not come from food. It is produced when enough of the right sunlight reaches enough of your skin. 5,000 IU is only 0.1 mg, a small quantity.

Read more: grassrootshealth.net

☐ Vitamin K2

100–120 mcg per day

Also called MK-7.

Helps move calcium away from soft tissue like the heart and carotid arteries, where it should not be, and toward the bones and teeth, where it should be. K2 also helps to reduce inflammation.

Read more: chriskresser.com

☐ Omega-3

The EPA that comes with it is also useful

680–750 mg of DHA per day

Usually **3 gelcaps** a day, any time of day.

Take Omega-3 (not Omega 3-6-9), in triglyceride form. It can stimulate neuron regrowth and the development and repair of synapses. 40% of our brain is made of DHA.

It also acts as an antidepressant and an anti-inflammatory, reduces the risk of developing dementia, and helps with dry eyes and dry skin.

Read more: wheatfreediseasefree.com

☐ Magnesium

Use magnesium bis-glycinate

200–800 mg per day (varies)

An important ingredient in many body functions.

Best taken a few hours before bed, because it can also help with sleep.

How to find your dose: start with 200 mg a day for one week. The next week, take 400 mg a day, then 600 mg a day the week after (all at once is fine). Keep increasing like this until you reach your bowel tolerance.

Once the magnesium starts moving your bowels too much, go back to the **highest dose where your bowels were fine**. This is usually in the 400–800 mg range.

If you already have bowel issues, start with only 50–100 mg a day and increase **very slowly**, only if you are able.

Read more: mindd.org

☐ Probiotics

10–15 billion per day

Or make your own yogurt, kefir, kombucha or sauerkraut.

They help to control inflammation and help your body and brain function at their best.

Note: regular store-bought fruity yogurts do not have many active probiotics in them.

Read more: healthline.com

☐ Vitamin B complex

1 capsule in the morning

Natural Factors Active B: use this brand or an identical one.

Take only in the **morning**, or it will keep you from sleeping. It can turn your urine bright greenish-yellow.

B vitamins are building blocks of a healthy body and affect your energy levels, nerve and brain function, and cell metabolism.

Read more: ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

☐ **Curcumin**

500 mg capsule, twice a day

A powerful anti-inflammatory.

Helps to reduce headaches if taken regularly.

If you have turmeric at home, look up “Golden Milk” recipes for a tasty drink. Be sure to add black pepper, which helps your body absorb it.

Read more: [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com)

☐ **PQQ / CoQ10**

20 mg / 200 mg combination, 1 capsule a day

Or CoQ10 100 mg on its own if cost is an issue.

Neuro-protective, and supports mitochondrial function.

Read more: [drlewisclarke.com](https://www.drlewisclarke.com) · Coenzyme Q10: review of its promise as a neuroprotectant

☐ **Lutein and vitamin C**

Not a pill: eat your coloured vegetables

Especially **dark greens**.

The lutein in greens will help your brain think faster. Try some cooked spinach daily; a frozen block is easy to add to food every day.

Eat a rainbow of greens and vegetables, not just spinach. Have some fruit too.

2 Others to consider

- **Creatine** — 5 g/day mixed into a drink. There are good indications it helps with memory.
- **Taurine** — 1,000 mg
- **L-Glutamine** — 500 mg
- **Quercetin**
- **Lion's mane**
- **Choline**
- **L-theanine**
- **Blueberries** — or blueberry extract

Read more: bebrainfit.com · ods.od.nih.gov (choline)

Be as positive as you can

The hippocampus (the learning and memory centre of the brain) grows with positive thoughts and shrinks with negativity. It also shrinks with Alzheimer's disease. Defend against Alzheimer's disease and dementia by being as positive as you are able.

Exercise

There is no pill or substitute for this. Move every single day, and don't sit for more than 30 minutes without standing, stretching and walking around. Walk outside, walk on stairs — move! Getting your heart rate up is one of the best drugs for your brain: it improves concentration and memory, and improves and speeds up brain healing.

3 Sleep

Sleep is crucial for brain health and recovery — one of the most important factors. Even if it means asking your doctor for help with sleep medication for a few years, you can slowly wean off later, once you are more healed and sleeping better. These tips are adapted from Dr. Andrew Huberman's podcast episode "Getting Sleep Right" (August 2021).

- 1 Get sunlight within 30 minutes after sunrise for 5–10 minutes, and again at dusk, every day. This helps reset your circadian rhythm, your body's natural rhythm with the sun.
- 2 Avoid all bright light from 10 pm to 4 am, even if you can't sleep. Keep lights very dim or off.
- 3 Take your magnesium 2 hours before bed, and have a warm cup of chamomile tea 1–2 hours before sleep.
- 4 Keep the room cool. Blankets are fine, but keep the air cool, around 66–68 °F (19–20 °C).
- 5 Keep it dark. Try an eye mask (such as a "Bucky" mask) if there is too much light.
- 6 No caffeine after 2 pm. None. That includes tea and chocolate.
- 7 No alcohol at all — yes, this is the right advice. Stop nicotine several hours before bed.
- 8 Try a warm or cool shower before bed, or soak in a bath with Epsom salts.
- 9 Learn to soften your body with breathing exercises or hypnosis (physiological sighs, reverichange.com). **4-7-8 breathing** works well: breathe in for 4, hold for 7, breathe out for 8. It reduces cortisol.
- 10 Keep a similar meal schedule most days. Eat slowly and not too close to bedtime; minimize or eliminate bedtime snacks, which lead to heartburn. Cut out processed foods, dyes and artificial sweeteners, especially at supper. You may need to make the evening meal less spicy; have spicy food at lunch instead.
- 11 Go to bed at about the same time every day, ideally no later than about 11 pm. The best healing sleep happens before midnight for most of us.
- 12 Minimize electronics, and stop scrolling half an hour before sleep. Reading a book is fine.
- 13 Try gentle white noise, the sound of waves, or a very calm, boring podcast (the only exception to "no electronics").
- 14 A weighted blanket (around 8–12 lb) sometimes helps with relaxation and sleep.
- 15 Keep a notebook and write a "brain dump" of everything on your mind from the day. It doesn't have to be coherent; just write out whatever is troubling you. This also helps if you wake in the night and can't get back to sleep. Keep the light very dim.
- 16 When you get home, change right away into comfortable clothes to help your body and muscles start to relax toward sleep.

4 Food

- Reduce or eliminate gluten; try it for at least 3–4 months (reduces inflammation).
- Reduce sugars, even natural sugars (reduces inflammation).
- Some people need to reduce or eliminate dairy, or just lactose.
- Maintain or increase the amount of meat and protein.
- Eat more vegetables, especially above-ground vegetables.
- Allow healthy fats — yes, some butter, olive oil and coconut oil. Our brains are made of fat.
- Eliminate or reduce preservatives, dyes and artificial sweeteners in most of your food.