Chew Your Way To Better Brain Function

You may remember your mum telling you to chew your food properly before you swallow when you were a kid. She probably insisted on this to keep you from choking on whatever you were eating in your over-eagerness. Or to help you cultivate more presentable eating habits.

Research now shows that your mum really did know best in this instance. Whether or not she knew it, her insistence on unrushed mastication (chewing) had important benefits over and above good table manners.

Chew more for better memory

According to scientific researchers, if you chew thoroughly, you improve your brain's ability to grasp new concepts, or remember those which you've read about or been taught before. There also appears to be a link between mastication and the delayed onset of dementia among the more advanced in age.

Benefits of chewing to boost brain function

- To begin with, chewing your food well leads to **better assimilation of nutrients** by the body. The act of mastication itself is aimed at breaking down food particles to increase the surface area on which digestive enzymes can work. So your brain has a better chance of getting the nutrients it needs to perform its role optimally.

- Chewing has also been found to boost the **flow of blood in the frontal cortex of the brain**. This helps in conducting sensory information to the brain more efficiently, improving a person's cognitive ability.

- Lower stress levels have been observed in an experiment among people who chew thoroughly, compared to those whose chewing ability has been impaired.

Well-functioning teeth support a well-functioning brain

In a survey, people with occlusal disharmony (misalignment of teeth on the jaw) were found to suffer from suppressed memory functions as compared to those with a full set of natural teeth. Their reduced mastication as a result of improper occlusion was found to hinder activity in the hippocampus. This is the part of the brain linked with memory.

Subjects in another study who had a full set of natural teeth performed better than their counterparts who wore dentures.

Oral health and cognitive decline with advancing age

People of more advanced age who suffer from reduced cognitive function tend to take less care of their oral health, and become more susceptible to conditions like periodontitis. This in turn, affects their ability to masticate effectively, which, in turn, further affects their brain function. They end up in a vicious cycle of steadily declining cognitive ability and oral hygiene.

Further studies have established a link between tooth loss caused by periodontal disease and Alzheimer's Disease. People who experienced tooth loss were found to be more at risk of developing AD later in life. One of the key symptoms of this condition is steadily declining cognitive ability.

Maintain good oral hygiene – your brain depends on it

The fact that chewing makes a significant contribution to your cognitive ability should encourage you to make your oral hygiene a priority.

The examples above highlight the importance of your teeth to the healthy functioning of your brain. If you take good care of your dental health now, your brain will thank you later.