

From the Nutritionist

Andrea Hart, RDN, CDN



The end of the year is a busy and often stressful time, with holiday preparations and commitments around every corner. For the college crowd, add final papers, presentations, projects, exams and preparing to go home for winter break.

When things are busy, it can be difficult to keep up with healthy habits, but this is the time when those healthy habits are more important than ever! Getting enough sleep and physical activity, and choosing a healthful, balanced diet can help you decrease stress and maximize your brain power so you can get it all done.

There are many nutrients in foods and drinks that can help your brain work at its best. Here are just a few:

- **Water** — Even mild dehydration can stress your entire body and impact academic performance, so be sure to drink plenty of water and non-caffeinated drinks. Although many people turn to caffeine for a boost of energy, high doses can also cause a number of side effects, including dehydration, increased heart rate, anxiety, feelings of stress, stomach pain and difficulty sleeping.
- **Complex carbohydrates** — These prompt the body to make serotonin, a “feel-good” chemical. They also keep your blood sugar stable, so you get a steady supply of energy to your brain. Choose more fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains like oatmeal, whole wheat bread and pasta, brown rice and quinoa.
- **Antioxidants** — These fight cell damage in your brain and throughout your body. Find them in fruits and vegetables, especially those with bright colors (think blueberries, broccoli, pomegranate juice), hot or iced tea (freshly brewed, not bottled or powdered), nuts and seeds (try walnuts, which even look like little brains) and dark chocolate (look for some containing a high percentage of cocoa).
- **Healthy fats** — These are essential for proper brain function, building brain cell membranes and improving blood flow within the brain. Try avocados, nuts and seeds, flaxseeds, plant based oils like olive and flaxseed oil, and fatty fish like salmon, albacore tuna, mackerel and sardines.

It's also important to find ways to unwind when life is busy. Be sure to visit **PAWS for Stress Relief** from 10 am to 4 pm Dec. 8 and 9 in the Corey Union Function Room for some fun ways to de-stress! You'll find more information about nutrition and stress, as well as snacks, arts and crafts, games, massage and everyone's favorite, dogs to play with!

Andrea Hart, registered dietitian nutritionist and New York State-certified dietitian/nutritionist, is available for free, confidential, one-on-one counseling and as a speaker or facilitator for campus groups, panels or classes.

Contact Andrea: andrea.hart@cortland.edu or call 607-753-5773 with questions or to set up an appointment. Or stop by her office, first floor, Neubig Hall, across from the Neubig Dining cashier.