

# 3 Foods that Help Stroke Recovery

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If you're looking to improve your diet by including more foods that help stroke recovery, then you've come to the right place.

**The following 3 foods help with stroke recovery because they promote the protein *brain-derived neurotrophic factor* (BDNF).**

[BDNF](#) is great fuel for stroke recovery because it enhances *neurogenesis*, which involves the creation of new neurons in the brain. This is different from [neuroplasticity](#), which involves the rewiring and reorganizing of the brain.

Neurogenesis is important during stroke recovery because your brain needs to regenerate new cells and pathways to compensate for the damage from stroke.

The following 3 goods can help boost BDNF which will promote neurogenesis and recovery after stroke.

## 1. Avoid Saturated Fat and Refined Sugar

Okay, so maybe this first one isn't a food that you should eat – rather, it's a couple of foods that you should definitely avoid!

**Studies show that saturated fat and sugar reduce BDNF, neuroplasticity, and learning. That's a triple negative**, so we'd like to repeat it because you really don't want to miss this:

Eating saturated fat and sugar reduces BDNF and stifles your brain's ability to grow new brain cells, rewire your current cells, and relearn the abilities that were impaired after stroke.

(Plus, saturated fat and sugar promote weight gain, which is a [stroke risk factor](#), so it's really a quadruple negative...)

How to remove saturated fats and refined sugars from your diet:

*Saturated fat* is typically found in:

- Dairy (butter, cream, ghee, milk, and cheese)
- Meat such as fatty cuts of beef, pork, and lamb
- Processed meats like salami, sausages, and the skin on chicken
- Palm oil and coconut oil

So try your best to avoid eating these foods.

*Refined sugar* is typically found in any packaged foods that have sugar listed in the ingredients. Beware – refined sugar can be masked under these names:

- Invert sugar
- Cane sugar
- Evaporated cane juice
- Corn syrup
- Brown rice syrup

Even organic sugar is still refined sugar, so do your best to avoid all sources.

## 2. Omega 3's

Omega-3 fatty acids have been [shown](#) to help normalize BDNF levels and protect against reduced plasticity and impaired learning after traumatic brain injury.

This is essentially the opposite of what saturated fat does to our brain — and that's great news! This means that brain cell regeneration goes up while potential negatives go down.

Since you want to [activate as much neuroplasticity](#) as possible during stroke recovery, it's a great idea to focus on getting your omega-3's.

How to get more omega-3's in your diet:

Some excellent sources of omega 3's are:

- Chia seeds
- Salmon
- Flaxseeds
- Hemp seeds
- Egg yolks

It's always best to get your vitamins from food first. If you have trouble getting these foods into your diet, then you can consider taking omega 3 supplements *as long as your doctor says it's okay*.

Sometimes supplements interfere with medication, so it's always important to check with your doctor first.

### 3. Blueberries

Blueberries are well-known for their memory-boosting qualities, but did you also know that blueberries also help boost neurogenesis and cognitive function?

[This study](#) showed that “blueberry supplementation led to improvement in some cognitive abilities, possibly due to the impact of flavonoids on cell signalling pathways (e.g. those involving BDNF).”

In other words, the flavonoids (antioxidants) in blueberries help boost brain function and neurogenesis. Score!

How to get more blueberries in your diet:

While the supplementation in the study included a ‘flavonoid-rich blueberry drink,’ we personally recommend getting your flavonoids from real blueberries.

While you can enjoy fresh blueberries straight from the source, there are many other ways to get them into your diet. You can freeze them and blend them into smoothies, or you can stir them into your morning oatmeal or salads.

However you do it, feel good about your decision to eat for a better recovery!