

Fall 2026

Elevate

PAGE
18

Brain Fog
Isn't Normal

PAGE
55

Apple Crisp
Yogurt Parfait

PAGE
8

Protein
for Kids

PAGE
28

Cycle Sync Your
Fall Routine

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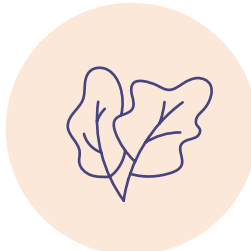
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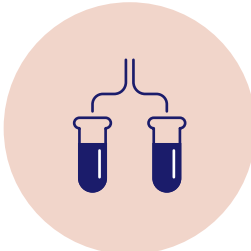
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PAGE 8

PEDIATRIC PROTEIN

DR. DANIELLA PERRI
ND, CCCE

Practice: MotherWell Academy / Innisfil / Simcoe County

Focus: Postpartum healthcare

Fan of: Arts & crafts with my 3 kiddos

Tip: Add veggies for breakfast to keep you feeling satisfied until lunch!

On my shelf: Allicin

PAGE 12

BACK-TO-SCHOOL IMMUNITY

DR. ADRIENNE DELUCA
ND & Doula

Practice: wellness-with-adrienne.com

Focus: Pediatrics, fertility, birth planning, pregnancy & postpartum

Fan of: Walking with my dog Ripley

Tip: Drink more water!

On my shelf: Herbal tea, coffee, Sour Patch Kids

PAGE 18

NATURAL BRAIN FOG SUPPORT

RENEE WULTERKENS
Naturopathic Medical Intern

Practice: @reneesndpath

Focus: hormones, digestion, pediatrics, stress/burnout

Fan of: Long walks and long books!

Tip: Unclench your jaw; relax your shoulders.

On my shelf: herbal tea, adaptogens, chocolate

PAGE 22

CORTISOL & FALL ENERGY

DR. ALISA MURLU
ND & Birth Doula

Practice: GTA, Downtown Toronto, Durham Region | dralisamurli.com

Focus: Hormones, prenatal, postpartum, and pediatrics

Fan of: Dogs, crafting, and food

Tip: Balance is key to healthy living!

On my shelf: Magnesium

PAGE 28

FALL CYCLE SYNCING

MARIYA MIRZA
Naturopathic Medical Intern

Practice: @med.mirza

Focus: Sports medicine, nutrition, and health optimisation

Fan of: Pasta and Pilates

Tip: Be consistent, not just motivated!

On my shelf: Vitamin D and magnesium

PAGE 34

SLEEP FOR BETTER SKIN

DR. EFFY GERMANIS
ND, R.Ac

Practice: Hygeia Naturopathic Clinic

Focus: Gut health, hormones, pain management

Fan of: 3,000+ piece puzzles

Tip: Enjoy your meals and chew your food!

On my shelf: Business and mindset books

PAGE 40/44

MEAL PREP / RECIPES

ANGELA MOSCARELLI
CPA, CA, RHN

Practice: Guided Wellness
guidedwellness.ca

Focus: Helping busy professionals optimize their health

Fan of: Gardening, fitness, and nature

Tip: A healthy lifestyle is about balance!

On my shelf: Spirulina, lemons, fermented coconut milk

PAGE 50

THE SWAP—PASTA

MARIA D'ALESSANDRO
RHN

Practice: Miala | www.miala.ca

Focus: Women's health, menstrual cycle, and endometriosis

Fan of: Walking my dog Apollo & reformer Pilates

Tip: Everything in moderation!

On my shelf: Magnesium, L-Glutamine



OLIVIA BUCKLEY
CNP

Practice: Liv n Natural | livnnatural.ca

Focus: Pediatrics, family health; selective eating & eczema specialist

Fan of: Sunshine, travel, and whole foods

Tip: Filter your water—drinking, cooking, and bath water!

On my shelf: Liposomal glutathione, curcumin



QUINN CARLAN
CNP

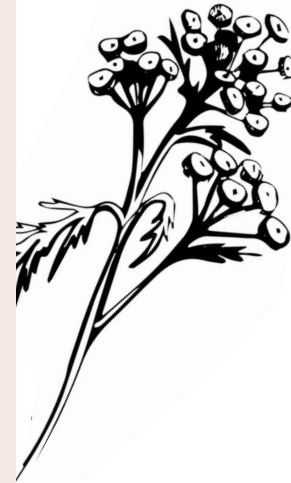
Practice: Quinn Carlan Wellness

Focus: Gut health, hormone health, mental health

Fan of: Food, movement, and the great outdoors

Tip: Nutrition—Keep it simple!

On my shelf: Functional mushrooms, warming spices, so many teas



“LIFE STARTS ALL OVER
AGAIN WHEN IT GETS CRISP
IN THE FALL.

— F. Scott Fitzgerald

Elevate

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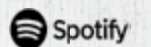
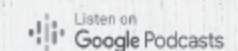
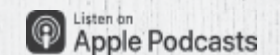


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PEDIATRIC PROTEIN INTAKE

The Ultimate Guide for Parents

Dr. Daniella Perri, ND, CCCE

As a naturopathic doctor and a mother of three, I've always been aware that protein intake is crucial to my children's growth and development, alongside carbohydrates, healthy fats, and vitamins and minerals. I'm grateful that my children aren't picky eaters, but like any kid, they have their bad days with food.

I created this guide for parents to learn about why protein is so important, where you can find it in the diet, and how to incorporate it into a picky eater's school lunch. Every parent struggles with their child(ren) not eating at some point, so let this guide make it easier for you to navigate healthy eating.

WHAT IS PROTEIN & WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

Current healthy diet trends put a huge emphasis on eating more protein. While protein intake is important for so many reasons, the quality of protein supersedes the quantity. For my own children, I was happy with them eating a little bit less when I knew that the protein I was giving them was local, had no preservatives in it, and was cooked to maintain the food's nutritional value.

Protein itself is a molecule made up of building blocks called amino acids. Amino acids are grouped into two main

categories: essential and nonessential. Nonessential amino acids are those that our bodies can create on their own. Essential amino acids are those that we require from food.

There are several reasons why we need amino acids to build protein molecules:

- 1. Immune function. Our bodies use protein to create antibodies that protect us from infections from viruses, bacteria, and parasites.
2. Tissue repair. Our bodies create proteins to help heal wounds and broken bones and regenerate damaged tissues and organs.
3. Growth. Amino acids create proteins, which create muscle fibres. This process is required for growth and development.
4. To support metabolic demands. Protein molecules are used for energy in the body and to help carry oxygen to your organs and tissues.

Being able to meet your child's age-specific protein requirements while navigating picky eating habits and prioritizing whole-food sources allows you to support healthy physical and cognitive development.

HOW MUCH PROTEIN DO KIDS NEED AT EVERY AGE?

While it may seem counterintuitive, children actually require more protein than adults do due to their higher growth rate, which involves muscle tissue formation, bone formation, and organ development. There are two periods during a child's life where growth rate peaks. The first is right after they're born until about age two. The second is during puberty. You will notice, or may already have noticed, a surge in their eating habits and appetite. Their bodies are responding to an exponential demand in protein intake.

Having said that, children at different ages do have different protein requirements. The following recommended dietary allowances (RDAs) are suggested by Health Canada to prevent protein deficiency and ensure healthy development.1 The guideline is that protein should account for 10 to 30 per cent of the child's daily caloric intake.

Table with 2 columns: AGE and RDA. Rows include Toddler (ages 1-3), Early childhood (ages 4-8), Pre-adolescent (ages 9-13), Adolescent females (ages 14-18), and Adolescent males (ages 14-18) with their respective protein requirements.

One exception to this guideline is for pediatric athletes. The strenuous activity involved in vigorous sports shifts the protein intake needs. According to current research, children involved in vigorous activity require 1.2 to 2.0 g/kg per day to keep up with the metabolic demands.2,3

Animal vs. Plant Protein: What Parents Should Know
A diet balanced in both animal and plant proteins makes it easy to obtain an appropriate amount of protein per day from a well-rounded variety of sources. That said, children on vegetarian diets can be just as healthy and get just as much protein as children who eat meat.

Animal proteins are defined as "complete" proteins because they naturally contain all of the essential amino acids required by the human body. Some examples are dairy, poultry, eggs, and fish. Plant proteins are known as "incomplete" proteins because



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Grace O'Driscoll / Unsplash+

they are missing or are low in specific essential amino acids like lysine or methionine, which are found in foods like legumes, grains, and nuts. Vegetarian diets often consist of combining multiple sources to obtain the correct amount of protein.

Plant proteins are a little harder to digest because of their fibre content, making absorption of amino acids less efficient—yet, the fibre is great for maintaining regular bowel movements. Animal protein is easier to digest, so the amino acids are more readily available to be absorbed by the body.

Both of these protein sources offer many benefits. Animal options naturally provide vitamins and minerals such as heme iron, vitamin B12, and zinc, while plant options support long-term metabolic health by supplying dietary fibre, poly-phenols, and lower saturated fat profiles. No matter what diet you decide to raise your child(ren) on, there are many ways to provide them with the right amount of protein to support healthy growth and development.

CAN KIDS EAT TOO MUCH PROTEIN?

In Western countries, children often consume two to three times the amount of protein recommended by baseline guidelines.² Current research has demonstrated that excess protein during early windows of development stimulate the production of insulin and insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1). This results in increased adipogenesis (fat cell formation),

which increases the risk of having an elevated body mass index and of early onset childhood obesity.² That's why infant formulas can only contain up to a maximum limit of protein: to mitigate this risk in infants.

Excess protein, especially highly processed protein such as cured, fried, or frozen meats and vegetarian meats, can lead to dehydration, increased kidney workload to get rid of protein waste products, and potential displacement of other vital macronutrients like fibre-rich carbohydrates.

In my experience, when you opt for a whole-foods approach to giving protein to your child, you're unlikely to give them too much. I always put what I think my child will eat on the plate and then take a little bit away. If they're hungry, they'll ask for more.

TIPS FOR ADDING MORE PROTEIN TO PICKY EATERS' DIETS

Creating meals for picky eaters poses a lot of challenges. I have worked with so many parents who just don't know what to do. For some, the sensory processing of eating protein is overwhelming and met with aversions toward those foods. Kids often have their carbohydrate go-tos that parents have no choice but to give them in fear that they won't meet their nutritional needs for the day.

Kid-Approved Ways to Incorporate Protein

1. Introduce dairy. You can use high-protein Greek yogurt or coconut- or oat-based yogurts. In addition, you can add a sprinkle of vegan protein powder to add flavour and even more protein.

2. Bake with high-protein flours. Using chickpea or lentil flour to make waffles, pancakes, and even muffins will give you the satisfaction that your child is getting protein with their snack or breakfast.

3. Add protein powder to your baking. When you're making baked goods, add a scoop of vegan or whey protein powder to the batter. You may have to adjust the fluid content, but it sure does add substance to those foods.

4. Use legume-based pasta instead of white pasta. Chickpea, lentil, and quinoa pastas have significantly higher protein content than regular pasta. Add your favourite sauce or even just a drizzle of olive oil and a pinch of salt.

Remember that eating, for children, is very much a sensory activity. Offer protein-rich foods such as organic edamame pods that they can pop into their mouths, hard-boiled eggs they can hold and bite into, and nut or seed butter dips with fruit skewers.

BUILDING BALANCED MEALS FOR SUSTAINED ENERGY AT SCHOOL

Making school lunches is hard and time consuming. However, a lunchbox consisting of simple carbohydrates such as white bread, crackers, pasta, cookies, and fruit juice leads to rapid blood glucose spikes followed by dramatic energy crashes. This compromises your child's attention spans in the classroom.

Since 32.6 percent of a child's daily energy and nutrient intake occurs at school,⁴ it's so crucial to pack nutrient-dense lunches. Let's take a look at what that actually looks like. I like using a bento box-style lunchbox to put the following food in:

¼ high-quality protein: shredded grilled chicken, uncured turkey breast pita rolls, edamame beans, or lentil pasta with tomatoes or pesto sauce

¼ complex carbohydrates: whole-grain wraps or bread, quinoa, brown basmati rice, or high-protein cereals (with no sugar added)

½ produce: berries, cucumbers, carrots, kale chips, apple slices, in-season fruits, organic seaweed snacks, or repurposed yogurt drink bottles filled with homemade protein smoothies.



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When you remember that these requirements are meant to be guidelines for the entire day, it lessens the stress. I often advise parents of picky eaters to look at their nutrient intake over the course of one week. Kids have bad food days, and that shouldn't be your baseline for how healthily your child is eating. Opt for whole-food options and balance between animal and plant sources of proteins if you can to help prevent overeating of processed protein sources. If you want and need your child to be vegetarian, remember that variety matters, and you can still achieve the appropriate amount of protein intake. 🌱

For references visit ecoparent.ca/ELV/FALL26



Back-to-School IMMUNITY SUPPORT

FOUNDATIONS ARE KEY

Dr. Adrienne DeLuca, ND

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Heading back to school after a summer of fun also means heading back to close contact with tons of other kids and millions of germs. Flu season typically starts around October and lasts into early spring. That means preparing our kiddos well in advance of this season so their immune systems are ready to fight the germs come fall. A lot of people think fancy supplements are the way to fight illnesses, but the truth is, the foundations are the most important thing you can do to set your kiddo up for success—so let's talk about them.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A STRONG IMMUNE SYSTEM

Nutrition

Eating a well-balanced diet ensures your child's immune system has all the building blocks it needs to fight pathogens.

If their diet contains an excess amount of sugar and fat—while simultaneously being lower in fibre, antioxidants, and micronutrients—their immune system isn't going to be at its strongest when a virus comes their way. It's not enough to start eating healthy when they're already sick, either. Many of the nutrients we need for a strong immune system are fat soluble—think vitamins A, D, E, and K.¹ This means they take time to build up and be stored in the fat tissue. Eating well all year round is the best way to ensure the immune system is ready for fall and winter, when bugs are likely to take hold.

To make sure your kiddo is getting all the nutrients they need to prep their immune system for back to school, focus on getting these foods into their diet:

» **Meat, fish, legumes, seeds, nuts, and whole grains.** Proteins are the building blocks for cytokines—key components of the immune messaging system. Eating a variety will ensure they're getting a little bit of each amino acid—which is important for supporting the immune system. Fish, legumes, seeds, and nuts contain immune-supporting minerals such as zinc, magnesium, and selenium.²

» **Brightly coloured fruits and vegetables.** Apricots, kiwi, blueberries, avocados, carrots, strawberries, Swiss chard, bell peppers, raspberries, red onions, and other brightly coloured produce are packed with vitamins and fibre.



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» **Fortified dairy products, eggs, and salmon.** These are great sources of vitamin D, which helps activate T cells and has other important functions that support your immune system.

» **High-fibre, prebiotic, probiotic, and fermented foods.** Over 70 percent of immune cells are associated with the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. Incorporating gut-friendly foods into the diet regularly is important for maintaining lymphoid tissue in the GI tract, which helps support the immune system.^{2,3} High-fibre foods include legumes, fruits, and vegetables, while fermented foods such as yogurt, kefir, and buttermilk provide probiotics that can support gut health. Prebiotic foods include foods rich in fermentable fibres, such as onions, garlic, leeks, bananas, oats, and legumes.

Exercise

Exercising regularly isn't just good for your bones, muscles, and heart health. It also supports your immune system. Research shows that moderate-intensity exercise provides immune support, improves cellular functioning, and reduces chronic inflammation.³ Moderate-intensity exercise means your heart rate is elevated about 50 to 60 percent higher than at rest (for example, if you have a resting heart rate of 70 beats per minute [BPM], you should aim to have a heart rate of around 105–112 BPM). Your breathing rate should have increased, but you should still be able to have a conversation. Think of going for a brisk walk, a light jog, a swim, or a bike ride for 150 minutes per week. The good news is it doesn't have to be all at once—even bursts of activity lasting 10 minutes can provide benefits!



Sleep

Many children in my office are not meeting sleep recommendation guidelines—and studies have shown this to be the case in modern society as a whole. In fact, many adults aren't meeting them, either! Sleep is protective for the immune system, and studies show that sleep deprivation leads to states of chronic inflammation and increased risk of infectious/inflammatory pathology—in addition to reduced neoplastic, cardio-metabolic, autoimmune, and neurodegenerative health.⁴

Sleep isn't the hip new thing, I know. But it is one of the best ways we can protect our kids' immune function. Talk to your doctor or look for the sleep recommendations set out by Health Canada.

KEY NUTRIENTS & HABITS TO SUPPORT BACK-TO-SCHOOL IMMUNITY

Vitamin D

A lot of people think that vitamin D “boosts” immune health, and while this thought process isn't exactly wrong, it's also not completely correct. Ensuring that you are not *vitamin D deficient* improves immune function. The problem is, many people aren't testing their vitamin D levels while simultaneously not getting enough vitamin D. You can use Health Canada's dietary reference recommendations to ensure your child is getting enough vitamin D through food, and if necessary, a supplement.⁵ Be wary of too much vitamin D, though, as it's fat soluble. Many supplements like children's fish oil and probiotics will already have vitamin D added, so make sure when you're totalling your child's daily vitamin D intake, you take those into account.

Zinc

Zinc works the opposite of vitamin D (or so we think now—we used to think we needed to keep our zinc levels up to prevent colds and flus). Recent research suggests taking zinc at the onset of illness is more effective than taking it as prevention.²

Vitamin C

Vitamin C deficiency results in impaired immunity and a higher susceptibility to infections. Most people in North America get enough vitamin C in their diets to keep them from being severely deficient (i.e., scurvy), but many folks aren't eating enough fruits and vegetables or fortified foods that contain

vitamin C. While your child likely doesn't require a supplement, offering them foods high in vitamin C—like bell peppers, strawberries, kiwi, tropical fruits, and dark, leafy greens—will help ensure they're getting enough of it to support their immune system.²

HEALTHY LUNCH & SNACK IDEAS FOR SCHOOL DAYS

Sandwiches or wraps. Spread light cream cheese or mayo, then layer with low-sodium deli meat (like chicken or turkey) and lots of your child's favourite veggies (like shredded lettuce, diced cucumber, or shredded carrot). If using a wrap, roll it up and slice into fun pinwheels.

Pasta salad. Combine leftover pasta noodles, dressing, chopped tomatoes, cucumbers, cheese, and diced boiled egg.

Frozen edamame. Warm and serve with a pinch of salt and a side of berries.

Chopped fruits and veggies. You can cut out fun shapes to make eating them more exciting for your kids.

WHEN TO CONSIDER IMMUNE SUPPORT SUPPLEMENTS

Immune-support supplements aren't meant for every kiddo. Remember—if your child(ren) are in their first or second years of daycare, or if they didn't go to daycare and are in school for the first time, they're going to get sick—a lot. It's normal for children to get sick six to eight times per school year! If, however, any of the following is happening, it might be time to chat with your naturopathic doctor about what else you could do to support your child's immune system:

- » Your child has gone through a significantly stressful period or experience⁶
- » Your child has asthma (but is not currently experiencing a flare-up)
- » You're curious about or your child has a known nutritional deficiency
- » You eat a standard North American diet with few fruits and vegetables or low in fibre

» Your child struggles with an adequate quality and quantity of sleep

All in all, there's no need (or real way) to “boost” the immune system. But, we do want to support it or “modulate” it as best as we can. We do this by using foundations like stress management, by encouraging good sleep habits and hygiene, proper nutrition, and enough exercise, and by ensuring their needs for immune function are being met. If your child has other things going on, it might be time to chat about what immune supplements might benefit them. Stay well, folks! 🍷



For references visit ecoparent.ca/ELV/FALL26

The Goods

BACK-TO-SCHOOL WELLNESS ESSENTIALS

SUPPORT IMMUNITY, HYDRATION, AND HEALTHY GROWTH FOR A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL YEAR.

The return to school means new classes, new friends, and new germs. The first step to a successful school year is building a strong wellness routine with the right nutrients to support immune function. These back-to-school supplements will keep your kiddo's defences up so they can kick classroom bugs to the curb and be ready for whatever the school year brings.



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BRAIN FOG ISN'T NORMAL

*Naturopathic Support
for Focus & Mental Clarity*

Renée Wulterkens, ND (Candidate)
& Dr. Alisa Murli, ND

Having grown up in Ontario, I'm no stranger to foggy mornings. I remember waking up to the smell of morning dew and learning that the school buses to my rural school had been cancelled because the fog was too thick for safe driving. Now think about your brain. You wake up feeling cloudy. You're having trouble concentrating, you've forgotten where you put your keys again, and somehow your coffee mug never made it under the machine. Not exactly the best way to start the day.

As a naturopathic medical student, I've noticed that brain fog is one of the most common things people live with without realizing. It's more than being tired or being busy. Many people are used to powering through, but maybe it's time we start clearing the fog.

With some practical strategies to support clearer thinking, you can work toward feeling your best.

WHY BRAIN FOG IS MORE THAN JUST FEELING TIRED

"Brain fog" is a common phrase used to describe a range of symptoms that can look a little different from one person to the next. Common symptoms include difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, fatigue, or even describing feelings of "mental fuzziness."¹ It may feel like everything takes more effort than it should.

Tiredness and brain fog can happen together, but they're not the same. While tiredness can improve with rest, brain

fog often lingers despite a night of seemingly good sleep. Someone with brain fog may feel awake but still struggle with concentration, memory, and clear thinking.

Brain fog isn't a formal diagnosis, but that doesn't make it any less real. You might normalize these symptoms because they appear slowly and generally worsen during stressful seasons. You might hear yourself saying, "I'm just stressed." In reality, brain fog is a message from the body that something deserves our attention, which is why it's so important to find the root cause.

COMMON CAUSES OF BRAIN FOG

Nutrient Deficiencies

Low iron, vitamin B12, vitamin D, and other deficiencies can affect energy, concentration, and mental clarity. Getting these vitamins and minerals tested through bloodwork can help your healthcare provider determine a treatment plan.

Hormonal Imbalances

Hormonal shifts can also play a major role. For women in perimenopause, fluctuating estrogen can affect memory, focus, sleep, and mental sharpness, which is why many women describe the very real phenomenon "NFLM" (not feeling like myself).² Thyroid dysfunction can also cause similar symptoms, so getting your thyroid hormones assessed may be helpful too.

Blood Sugar Dysregulation

One of the most common drivers for brain fog is blood sugar dysregulation.^{3,4} Because the brain depends on glucose for fuel, both low blood sugar and frequent blood sugar swings can affect attention, memory, and mental clarity.

EVERYDAY HABITS THAT CAN INCREASE MENTAL FATIGUE

Morning Phone Scroll

In a world of endless notifications and media multitasking, having constant access to a smartphone can interfere with your attention and cognitive performance. Starting your morning by checking your notifications immediately puts your brain into a reactive state and sets the tone for a more scattered day.^{5,6}

Instead, try giving your brain time without your phone when you wake up. Even as few as 10 minutes can help you feel more grounded and intentional before you open your notifications.

Skipping Meals

Eating a balanced diet is important for reducing brain fog. If you skip a meal or fuel your body with quick energy from caffeine and refined carbohydrates, your body gets a quick wave of energy followed by a crash, which can leave you feeling foggy, shaky, or unable to concentrate. Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) can disrupt your working memory and alertness, even if you don't have diabetes.³ Try snacks that combine healthy carbohydrates with protein, fibre, and fat to help keep blood sugar, energy, and focus steadier, like:

- » An apple with nut butter
- » Unsweetened yogurt with berries and nuts
- » Hummus with veggies
- » A small portion of leftovers like chicken, rice, and veggies

Compared to simple, refined carbohydrates like energy drinks, sugary coffee-based drinks, muffins, juice, chips, or candy, the above combinations are digested more slowly to keep your brain working at its best!





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Chronic Stress & Burnout

Stress—specifically, chronic stress—has the ability to disrupt your brain function. Stress directly affects the areas in your brain that are responsible for attention and processing, executive functioning, and memory.⁷ Chronic stress can also make it harder to stay consistent with the habits that support brain health in the first place.

NATUROPATHIC APPROACHES TO MITIGATE BRAIN FOG

Go Back to Basics

For many people, the first step to reducing brain fog is not adding more to the list but going back to the basics. Start with the foundations: quality sleep, regular, balanced meals, adequate hydration, and stress management.

Eat a Balanced Breakfast

Start your day with a nourishing breakfast that includes protein and fibre, and avoid long stretches without food. Eggs, avocado, and tomato on sourdough or whole-grain toast; oatmeal topped with Greek yogurt, fruit, nuts, and seeds; and cottage cheese with fruit and chia seeds are a few good options to start your day! Some out-of-the-box ideas could be adding a portion of last night's protein (fish, chicken, beef, tofu) or opening a can of sardines to help keep you satisfied and your brain working well.

Note: If you have diabetes or another health condition that affects your blood sugar or digestion, do not make any changes without consulting your healthcare provider.

Check Your Vitamin & Mineral Levels

As mentioned above, iron, vitamin B12, and vitamin D deficiencies can all lead to brain fog. The best way to know if

you're deficient is through a blood test. Your naturopathic doctor can recommend the right dose for you after testing.^{8,9}

Consider Additional Tools

Adaptogens are herbs like ashwagandha, rhodiola, or ginseng that can minimize brain fog and are shown to help the body cope with stress and support energy by influencing our stress-response.^{10,11} Some studies suggest that specific adaptogens may reduce subjective fatigue and improve attention under stress, but overall, they can be useful to help address the underlying cause. Discuss any new supplement with a qualified practitioner, especially if you take other medications or have medical conditions. The world of supplements is endless, and guidance is *necessary* to ensure you're taking the right dose and type and that they're safe and effective for you.

If you notice your brain fog is relentless, severe, or accompanied by other systemic symptoms (such as fever, weight changes, sleep disturbances, etc.), there may be something else going on. Migraines, post-infection, and autoimmune conditions, anxiety, depression, and ADHD can also contribute and require a full investigation with a healthcare provider.

SUPPORT YOUR BRAIN TOWARD CLARITY

Brain fog may be common, but it shouldn't be normalized. When your thinking feels cloudy, scattered, or slower than usual, your body is asking for support. The good news is that there are often simple steps you can take, from improving sleep and meals to checking in on nutrients, hormones, and stress levels. You don't have to accept living in a fog as your new normal. With the right support, clarity is possible. 🌿

For references visit ecoparent.ca/ELV/FALL26

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The Cortisol Connection

WHY WOMEN FEEL
EXHAUSTED EVERY FALL

Cara Gwizd, MHSc., CHE, ND (Candidate)
& Dr. Alisa Murli, ND

Matthew Ball / Unsplash+

As a former midwife and a mother of four, I've spent decades witnessing the profound rhythms of human biology under pressure. Now, as a third-year naturopathic medical student navigating my 40s, while simultaneously supporting a parent transitioning out of this life, the concepts of exhaustion and resilience are no longer merely academic; they're deeply personal. Years of demanding clinical shifts, raising young children, and managing acute familial grief have taught me that our bodies carry an invisible ledger of stress.

I've noticed, in both myself and the individuals I serve, that as summer fades, a distinct shift occurs. When the autumn evening light begins to fade earlier each day, it pulls our vitality down with it. You might find yourself staring at a pile of laundry or sitting in your car a moment longer just to breathe, wondering why everything suddenly feels heavier. This seasonal exhaustion isn't a simple consequence of a busy schedule, a lack of willpower, or a personal failure; it's a predictable neuroendocrine response built right into our biology. To truly understand why this transition hits women with such specific intensity, we must take an academic look at our biological architecture and honour the physical ways our nervous systems register the changing of the seasons.

WHY FALL HITS WOMEN'S ENERGY LEVELS DIFFERENTLY

Autumn brings a dramatic drop in daylight that triggers a cascade of changes in our bodies.¹ In the base of the brain sits a tiny internal clock called the suprachiasmatic nucleus. This master pacemaker relies entirely on environmental light to set our daily biological rhythm.² As the days shorten, the sudden reduction in morning light forces this internal clock to rapidly reset itself.

This seasonal shift doesn't happen in isolation; it coincides with our fluctuating hormones, particularly in women. Estrogen and progesterone heavily influence how our brains respond to stress and how it produces neurotransmitters, like serotonin.³ When the external world grows dark and cold, our internal systems have to work harder to adapt.

This transition hits mothers and caretakers particularly hard because our bodies are likely already carrying a high baseline of stress. Balancing the needs of growing families while holding space for aging parents creates a layer of chronic psychological strain known academically as *allostatic load*.⁴

If you feel like your body is keeping score of every sleepless night, every worried thought, and every boundary you had to cross to keep others safe, it's because it is. The cumulative stress signals our nervous system that it is under pressure, making us uniquely vulnerable to the changing seasons.

THE HIDDEN LINK BETWEEN CORTISOL & SEASONAL FATIGUE

At the very centre of autumn fatigue is a hormone called cortisol. Often mislabeled as simply a stress hormone, *cortisol* is our primary hormone of *vitality*. In a healthy system, it follows a strict daily wave: it spikes sharply about 30 minutes after we wake up, a phenomenon known as the cortisol awakening response, to give us energy for the day, and then steadily drops until it hits its lowest point at midnight.⁵

This daily wave is generally dependent on morning sunlight hitting our eyes via the pathways connecting the retina to the brain. Reduced morning light exposure and seasonal changes may alter circadian timing and cortisol rhythms in susceptible individuals.⁶ Reduced sunlight exposure can lead to lower vitamin D synthesis, and low vitamin D status has been associated with fatigue and low mood. Vitamin D receptors are widely distributed throughout the brain, and the vitamin is thought to play a role in regulating neurotransmitter systems, including dopamine pathways, as well as supporting normal neuronal function.⁷ Meanwhile, longer periods of darkness in the evening triggers our bodies to produce melatonin, the sleep hormone, much earlier in the day, which may lead to afternoon drowsiness. These changes can make your already stressed body feel more depleted.⁸

SIGNS YOUR CORTISOL LEVELS MAY BE OUT OF BALANCE

When your circadian rhythm is disrupted, you might notice some distinct signs and symptoms. This is a clinical indication that your stress response system is struggling to adapt to the changing environment. Here is some of what you may experience:

» **The wired-but-tired paradox:** You feel exhausted all day long, yet the moment your head hits the pillow at night, your mind starts racing. You experience a surge of anxiety and alertness right around midnight, keeping you trapped in a cycle of insomnia.

- » **Sub-optimal morning awakening:** The inability to feel awake or functional during the first hour of the day. You might feel heavy, have brain fog, or be exhausted.
- » **Altered carbohydrate dynamics:** Craving carbohydrates, sweets, or comfort foods. When cortisol isn't properly regulating your blood sugar, your brain demands quick glucose to keep you going.⁹
- » **Suppressed immune resilience:** Finding yourself catching every cold and bug, as unbalanced stress hormones compromise the primary immune barriers in your respiratory system.
- » **Impaired recovery times:** Feeling completely wiped out for days after a minor physical workout or a stressful emotional conversation, signalling that your deeper adrenal reserves are entirely tapped.¹⁰

NUTRITION STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT ENERGY & CORTISOL BALANCE

When blood sugar drops, the body interprets it as an emergency and pumps out adrenaline and cortisol in response, increasing anxiety and feelings of stress, which may deplete your energy further.¹¹

Eating balanced meals that focus on good-quality protein, healthy fats, and complex, slow-burning carbohydrates keeps your blood sugar balanced. Think of fast carbohydrates (like pastries and white rice) as kindling that burns hot and crashes quickly, while complex carbohydrates (like root vegetables, oats, and quinoa) act like a heavy log on the fire, providing hours of steady, calm glucose release into the bloodstream to make your body feel safe from within.⁹

Targeted Micronutrient Support

- » **Magnesium glycinate** helps dampen over-excited brain receptors, softening the physical impact of stress and helping to quiet the systemic noise of survival mode.¹²
- » **Phosphatidylserine** quiets the brain's internal alarm system, slowing down the overproduction of stress hormones when your life and your responsibilities feel overwhelming.¹³
- » **Adaptogenic botanicals** (*ashwagandha* & *rhodiola*) help the body adapt to stressors. *Ashwagandha* (*Withania*

somnifera) acts like a supportive, calming blanket, enhancing grounding pathways in the brain to lower overall cortisol concentrations.¹⁴ Conversely, *Rhodiola rosea* protects your brain from the deep physical and emotional crash that comes with chronic fatigue.¹⁵



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SUPPORTING YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM THROUGH SEASONAL TRANSITIONS

While feeding your body correctly provides the biochemical foundation for recovery, you must also employ lifestyle modifications to reprogram your internal clock and support nervous system equilibrium.

Circadian Realignment via Photic Input

The most potent tool to fix a flat cortisol curve is direct, bright sunlight exposure within 30 minutes of waking up. Since

autumn mornings are dark, using a specialized 10,000-lux light therapy box at your kitchen counter or simply turning on a few bright lights in your home can help simulate the missing summer sun if needed. This simple trick signals the brain to clear out nighttime sleepiness and properly launch your morning cortisol wave, giving a gentle, artificial dawn to an exhausted system.¹⁶

Somatic Down-Regulation

To shift your body out of a defensive fight-or-flight state and into a restorative rest-and-digest state, you must move the stress out of your physical tissue. Low-intensity walks in nature allow your brain to process heavy emotions through rhythmic movement without raising stress hormones.¹⁷ Beyond this, practicing deep breathwork, scheduling deliberate pauses, and fiercely protecting your boundaries aren't luxuries; they're clinical necessities. They give your nervous system the respite it craves during stressful periods in our lives.

BIOLOGICAL INPUT	SEASONAL IMPACT	CLINICAL MANIFESTATION
Diminished Photoperiod	Your brain's internal clock is delayed, and sleep hormones spill into your morning.	Waking up in a thick fog; fighting intense afternoon fatigue.
Chronic Allostatic Load	Your stress response system becomes worn out, flattening your daily energy curve.	Constant exhaustion paired with a racing, anxious mind at night.
Fluctuating Hormones	Changing female chemistry makes your nervous system extra sensitive to stress inputs.	Feeling emotionally and physically vulnerable to the change of season.

The transition into autumn is an inescapable part of nature's cycle, but the profound physical exhaustion that women feel during this time is modifiable. Autumn fatigue is the tangible intersection of shorter days, changing female chemistry, and the heavy, tender load of caring for the people we love. When we understand that our exhaustion isn't a personal failure, a lack of strength, or an inability to keep up, but a predictable biological response to an unbalanced stress curve, we can finally stop blaming ourselves and start practicing targeted, clinical compassion.



Getty Images / Unsplash+

By using nutrition to stabilize our blood sugar, leaning on restorative herbs to protect our nervous systems, and using bright light to reset our internal clocks, we can successfully protect our vital reserves. As the evenings draw in, taking charge of our biological health allows us to step off the wheel of seasonal depletion. The goal isn't merely to survive the winter months but to build a resilient, gentle framework that allows us to show up fully for our families, our callings, and the quiet, sacred spaces of our own lives. 🍂

For references visit ecoparent.ca/ELV/FALL26

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Cycle Syncing

Create a Fall Routine That Works with Your Hormones, Not Against Them

Mariya Mirza, ND (candidate) & Dr. Alisa Murli, ND

Fall has always felt like a fresh start to me. Maybe it's the back-to-school energy, the return to routines, or simply the fact that September often feels more like a new year than January. Suddenly calendars fill up, extracurriculars resume, work becomes busier, and everyone seems determined to get back on track. But there's one problem with most fall routines: they're built on the assumption that our energy stays the same every day.

Over the years, I've spoken with countless women who feel frustrated by fluctuating motivation, changing energy levels, or weeks where they simply don't feel as productive as they did a few days earlier. Many assume they're doing something wrong. More often than not, they're experiencing normal hormonal shifts.

It's commonly thought that the menstrual cycle is just about having a period and reproduction. However, in reality, it can influence so much more. Throughout the month, our bodies experience fluctuations in estrogen and progesterone that affect sleep, mood, metabolism, exercise recovery, and even cognition.¹ Understanding these changes can help you create routines that feel more sustainable and in tune with your body. Cycle syncing isn't about restricting your life to a calendar. It's about understanding your body's natural rhythms and learning how to work with them.

UNDERSTANDING THE 4 PHASES OF THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

Most people think of their menstrual cycle as simply the days they bleed (i.e., their period). In reality, menstruation is only one phase of a much larger hormonal rhythm. Throughout the month, estrogen and progesterone rise and fall in predictable patterns, influencing mood, energy, appetite, sleep, cognitive function, and the body's response to stress.²

While everyone experiences their cycle differently, understanding these phases can help explain why some weeks feel productive and energizing, while others leave you craving an early bedtime and a quiet evening at home.

Menstrual phase: The cycle begins with menstruation. The day you get your period is day one of your menstrual cycle. Estrogen and progesterone are at their lowest levels as the uterine lining sheds.³ For many women, this phase naturally feels like a time for rest and recovery. For those living with conditions like endometriosis or adenomyosis, this phase can bring pain and fatigue that go well beyond typical discomfort, and that experience is real and valid.⁴ If your body is asking for rest, honouring that isn't falling behind—it's meeting a genuine need.

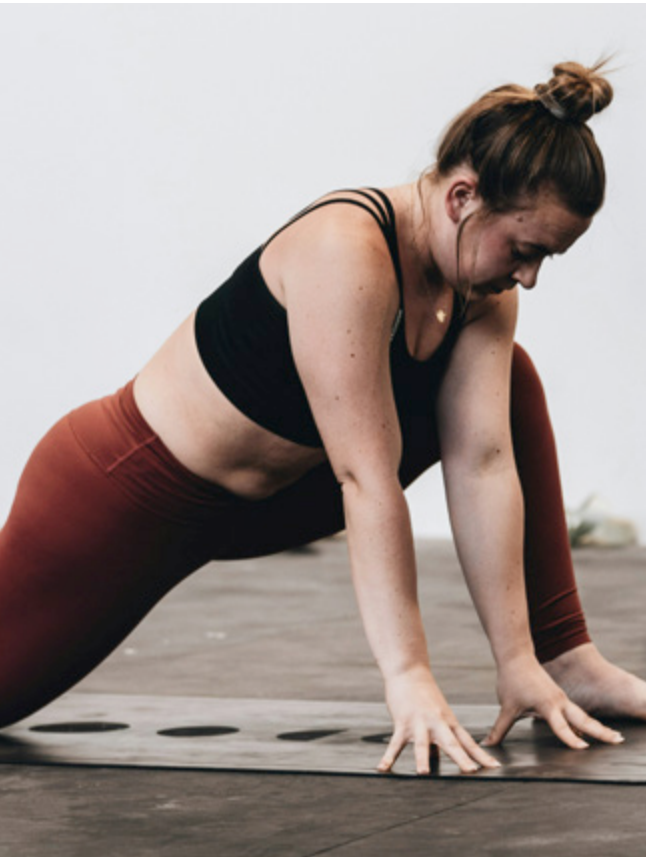
Alexa Williams / Unsplash+

Follicular phase: As menstruation ends, estrogen begins to rise and follicles (i.e., your eggs) mature in preparation for ovulation.³ It is not uncommon to notice a gradual return of energy, motivation, and mental clarity during this phase.

Ovulatory phase: Around the middle of the cycle, estrogen peaks and ovulation occurs. Around ovulation, cycling women can notice an increase in self-assurance and a better mood.⁵ If you're a parent, the mental load may not disappear, but it can feel easier to carry.

Luteal phase: After ovulation, progesterone becomes the dominant hormone. This phase tends to be more inward-focused and, for some women, may bring changes in appetite, cravings, mood, sleep, or stress tolerance as the body prepares for the next cycle.^{1,2,6}

Understanding these phases can be surprisingly validating. When we understand this rhythm, it becomes easier to see that what feels like inconsistency is often just a normal physiological shift driven by hormonal changes that influence energy, mood, and cognitive function.



HOW HORMONES INFLUENCE ENERGY, MOOD & PRODUCTIVITY

Have you ever had a week where you feel like you're firing on all cylinders? You answer emails quickly, tackle your to-do list with ease, and somehow still have the patience to help with homework, make dinner, and get everyone to bed. Then a week later, the exact same responsibilities feel twice as difficult.

You're not imagining it. Estrogen and progesterone don't just regulate reproduction. They interact with neurotransmitter systems, including serotonin, dopamine, and GABA, to influence mood, motivation, cognitive performance, and stress resilience.⁷

As estrogen rises during the follicular phase, many women notice greater mental clarity, creativity, and motivation. This may be why brainstorming, learning new skills, or starting projects often feels easier during this time.

After ovulation, progesterone takes the lead. While it can have calming effects on the nervous system, it may also make some women feel more emotionally sensitive or less tolerant of stress, particularly in the days leading up to menstruation.

Of course, hormones are only one piece of the puzzle. Sleep, nutrition, stress, and overall health all influence how we feel. But understanding the role hormones play can help replace self-criticism with self-awareness. Instead of asking, "Why can't I keep up?" we can start asking, "What support does my body need right now?"

ADJUSTING YOUR WORKOUTS & NUTRITION THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

If your workouts feel different from week to week, your cycle may be part of the reason. Some research suggests hormonal fluctuations can influence exercise performance, recovery, and perceived exertion throughout the month, but the overall evidence is limited. One study concluded that the best approach is an individualized one, based on how your body responds rather than a rigid set of rules.⁷

During menstruation, there is a natural gravitation toward gentler forms of movement such as walking, stretching, yoga, or lower-intensity exercise. Others continue training as usual. The key is learning to distinguish between challenging yourself and overriding what your body is asking for.

In the follicular phase, many women report feeling stronger,

more energized, and more motivated to move. This can be an ideal time for strength training, trying a new fitness class, or increasing workout intensity.

The luteal phase often calls for greater flexibility. Higher progesterone levels can increase core body temperature and make intense exercise feel more demanding.⁸ For those who notice this, swapping a high-intensity session for a walk, Pilates class, or recovery day can be a reasonable adjustment.

Nutrition may shift too. Research suggests energy expenditure may increase slightly during the luteal phase, which may explain why hunger and cravings become more noticeable for some women.⁶ Rather than fighting those signals, focus on balanced meals that include protein, fibre, healthy fats, and complex carbohydrates to support stable energy throughout the day.

The takeaway is to notice your own patterns and let them inform how you move.

PLANNING AROUND YOUR CYCLE WITHOUT COMPLICATING IT

Planning your life around your cycle can sound like one more task to add to your to-do list—but it doesn't have to be. Many of us already organize our calendars around work deadlines, school events, extracurricular activities, and family commitments. Cycle awareness simply adds another layer to organize around.

And you don't have to navigate it alone. If certain days feel more challenging, this can be a good time to lean on your support system. Working with your body sometimes means letting others work alongside you.

SUPPORTING SLEEP, STRESS & HORMONE BALANCE

No matter where you are in your cycle, the foundations of hormone health remain the same. Sleep, stress management, nutrition, and movement all influence how resilient we feel throughout the month.

Some research suggests sleep quality may be disrupted during the luteal phase, partly due to progesterone-related changes in body temperature.⁹ This can make consistent sleep habits especially important in the week before menstruation.

Stress also deserves attention. Chronic stress can amplify hormonal symptoms and make normal cycle fluctuations feel

more intense. It can also affect the habits that support hormone health in the first place, including sleep, movement, and eating patterns.

While there is no single supplement, workout, or morning routine that will "fix" hormones, returning to the basics often has the greatest impact: prioritizing sleep, eating balanced meals, moving your body regularly, and creating moments of recovery throughout the week. Sometimes the most powerful support isn't adding more to your routine, it's giving yourself permission to work with your body instead of against it.



FINDING BALANCE THROUGH CYCLE AWARENESS

The menstrual cycle is not a productivity tool, nor is it something that needs to be perfectly optimized. What cycle awareness offers is context. It helps explain why your energy, focus, and mood may shift throughout the month and reminds you that those fluctuations are not necessarily signs that something is wrong. More often, they are part of a normal physiological rhythm.

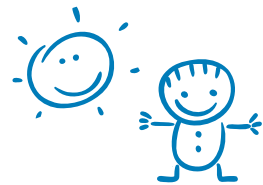
As life becomes busier this fall, consider paying attention to your own patterns. Notice when you feel energized, when you feel stretched thin, and when you naturally crave rest. You may discover that the goal isn't to have the same amount of energy every day but to understand the rhythm you're already living in and learn how to support it—because your body was never meant to feel the same every day of the month. 🌙

For references visit ecoparent.ca/ELV/FALL26

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SLEEP YOUR WAY TO BETTER SKIN

Why Beauty Rest Actually Matters

Dr. Effy Germanis, ND, R.Ac



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We often hear the phrase "beauty sleep," but it turns out there's real science behind it. While skincare products certainly have their place, some of the most important work for healthy, glowing skin happens while you're asleep.

Sleep isn't simply a period of rest; it's an active time when the body repairs tissues, regulates hormones, balances inflammation, and restores energy. Your skin, the body's largest organ, is no exception. Overnight, skin cells work hard to repair damage from UV exposure, pollution, stress, and the normal wear and tear of daily life.¹

If you've ever looked in the mirror after a poor night's sleep and noticed dullness, puffiness, dark circles, or breakouts, you've already seen the connection between sleep and skin health firsthand. The good news is that improving your sleep habits may be one of the most effective and affordable ways to support healthier, younger-looking skin.

THE LINK BETWEEN SLEEP & SKIN HEALTH

Think of sleep as your skin's nightly repair shift. During deep sleep, blood flow to the skin increases, allowing oxygen and nutrients to reach skin cells more effectively. This is also when the body increases cellular repair processes and helps restore the skin barrier, the protective outer layer that keeps moisture in and environmental irritants out.

Research has shown that poor sleep quality is associated with increased signs of skin aging, reduced skin barrier function, and lower satisfaction with appearance. In one landmark study, women who slept poorly showed more fine lines, uneven pigmentation, and slower recovery from skin stressors compared to good sleepers.²

Sleep deprivation has also been shown to impair skin barrier function, leading to increased water loss from the skin and reduced hydration. When the barrier becomes compromised, skin may appear dry, irritated, sensitive, or inflamed.³

HOW MUCH SLEEP DOES YOUR SKIN ACTUALLY NEED?

Most adults require between seven and nine hours of quality sleep per night for optimal health. The key word is quality. Seven hours of uninterrupted, restorative sleep is often more beneficial than nine hours of fragmented sleep. Current sleep recommendations continue to support this range for most adults.

Consistency matters as well. Going to bed and waking up at roughly the same time each day helps regulate your circadian rhythm, the body's internal clock. This rhythm influences everything from hormone production to skin cell turnover and repair.

HOW SLEEP AFFECTS COLLAGEN, FINE LINES & AGING

Collagen is the structural protein responsible for keeping skin firm, smooth, and resilient. As we age, collagen production naturally declines. Poor sleep has been shown to accelerate this process.

Research suggests that sleep deprivation can impair collagen production and disrupt the normal repair processes that occur overnight.⁴ When the body is deprived of sleep, inflammation and oxidative stress increase, which may contribute to the breakdown of collagen and elastin fibres that help maintain youthful-looking skin.

Poor sleep also increases cortisol, commonly known as the stress hormone. Elevated cortisol levels can promote inflammation throughout the body and may worsen skin concerns such as acne, rosacea, eczema, and premature aging. Higher cortisol has also been linked to reduced collagen synthesis and slower wound healing.⁵

Over time, inadequate sleep can contribute to:

- » Fine lines and wrinkles
- » Dull, lacklustre skin
- » Reduced elasticity and firmness
- » Dark circles and puffiness
- » Increased skin sensitivity
- » Slower healing of blemishes and irritation

Researchers have even found that chronic poor sleepers demonstrate more visible signs of intrinsic skin aging compared to individuals who consistently sleep well.⁶

In simple terms, while expensive creams can certainly help support healthy skin, they cannot fully replace the restorative processes that occur during deep, quality sleep.

OVERNIGHT HABITS THAT SUPPORT HEALTHIER SKIN

The good news is that supporting your skin overnight doesn't require a complicated routine. Small, consistent habits can make a meaningful difference.

1. Prioritize a consistent sleep schedule. Your body thrives on routine. Going to bed and waking up at the same time each day supports healthy circadian rhythms, allowing your skin's repair mechanisms to function optimally.

2. Create a sleep-friendly environment. Aim for a cool, dark, and quiet bedroom. Reduce exposure to bright screens at least 30 to 60 minutes before bed, as blue light can interfere with melatonin production and delay sleep onset.

3. Support hydration. Proper hydration helps maintain skin barrier integrity. Drink water throughout the day and consider using a gentle moisturizer before bed to support overnight hydration.

4. Avoid heavy meals and alcohol before bed. Large meals, alcohol, and excessive caffeine close to bedtime can disrupt sleep quality. Even if you fall asleep quickly, sleep may be less restorative.

5. Establish a relaxing evening ritual. A calming bedtime routine signals to your nervous system that it's time to rest. Consider:

- » Reading
- » Gentle stretching
- » Meditation or breathwork
- » Journaling
- » A warm bath
- » Light facial gua sha or self-massage

Reducing stress before bed may support both sleep quality and skin health.

6. Think beyond skincare. Beautiful skin is often a reflection of overall health. Nutrition, movement, stress management, gut health, and sleep all work together. No serum can compensate for chronic sleep deprivation.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Healthy, glowing skin isn't created solely in the bathroom mirror; it's built overnight while you sleep. Every night of quality sleep gives your body an opportunity to repair damage, regulate inflammation, restore hydration, and support collagen production. While skincare products can enhance your results, they work best when paired with the foundational habits that support skin from within.

If you're looking for a simple place to start improving your skin health, consider focusing less on adding *more* products and more on adding *the right* products and protecting your sleep. Your skin will thank you for it in the morning. 🌞

For references visit ecoparent.ca/ELV/FALL26

SUPPORTING BEAUTY SLEEP

HEALTHY SKIN STARTS WITH RESTORATIVE SLEEP

This fall, we're taking our beauty sleep seriously. In addition to supporting memory and learning and optimizing brain function, deep, restorative sleep might be the key to glowing skin. The products we put on our skin are just as important as the ones we use to achieve a relaxing ambiance that promotes better sleep. Set yourself up for skin success by prioritizing these beauty sleep essentials.



BENEFITS BY NATURE –Epsom Salts

Rich in magnesium sulfate, an Epsom salt soak can help ease tired muscles and encourage relaxation before bed, making it easier to unwind after a long day.



MINTIER –Collagen Mouth Tape

Mouth tape helps encourage closed-mouth breathing overnight, supporting a more comfortable sleep environment.



BOLTON'S NATURALS –Lavender Magnesium Chloride Lotion

This lavender-infused magnesium lotion provides lightweight hydration while adding a calming, spa-like touch to your evening self-care ritual.



AROMA FORCE –Relax Soy Candle

Set the mood for restful sleep with this blend of calming essential oils. Lighting it as part of your evening wind-down routine can help create a peaceful atmosphere that supports relaxation, and consistently prioritizing quality sleep gives your skin the opportunity to recover and regenerate overnight.

MEDICUBE –Collagen Night Wrapping Mask

An overnight sleeping mask creates a moisture-sealing layer that helps keep skin hydrated while you rest. Apply it as the last step in your evening routine to wake up with skin that feels dewy and well-rested.



SKIN1004 –Probio-Cica Bakuchiol Eye Cream

The delicate eye area can benefit from targeted overnight care. This nourishing eye cream hydrates while helping smooth the appearance of fine lines, so your eyes look brighter and more refreshed by morning.

AROMATIC CREATION –Sleep Well Linen + Room Spray

A light spritz on your pillow or linens can instantly make your bedroom feel like a spa. Featuring calming aromatherapy-inspired scents, this spray is an easy way to create a peaceful environment before lights out.



LA LUNA –Fragrant Oil Signature Spa Collection Kit & Waterless Portable Diffuser Aura

A relaxing bedtime atmosphere can make your evening routine feel more restorative. Pair calming essential oil blends with a portable diffuser to fill your space with soothing aromas that help set the mood for winding down. 🌿

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90% of Canadians like you have chosen to buy organic in the last year. Keep choosing organic for the betterment of your health, animal welfare, and the planet.

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76% of globally important commercial crops depend on insect pollination. Organic prohibits toxic pesticides which ensures the bees do their job, pollinating!

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BACK-TO-SCHOOL Meal Prep Made Simple

Angela Moscarelli, RHN

It's back-to-school season, which means it's time to start thinking about packed lunches for your kids and yourself (because Uber Eats isn't a sustainable solution for your health or wallet). Fall is the perfect time to get productive and establish healthy routines, so why not make healthy eating part of this important shift? Setting aside some time to prepare a few healthy meals and snacks each week not only saves time and money but also means one less thing to think about as you dive back into a crammed schedule with work demands, school, sports, and after-school activities. These recipes require minimal preparation, use everyday ingredients, and are packed with flavour designed to keep you coming back week after week.

On-The-Go Breakfast Smoothie Packs

Mornings are stressful enough without having to prepare something nutritious before rushing out the door or scramble to get the kids ready before the school bus arrives. Having a nutrient-dense breakfast prepped and ready to go can be a game changer for your morning routine and set a healthy momentum for the rest of the day.

INGREDIENTS

- » **Chocolate banana:** 1 banana cut into slices, ½ c chopped zucchini, 1 Tbsp nut butter, 1 Tbsp flax seeds, 1 Tbsp cocoa powder, 1 scoop protein powder, and 1 c milk of choice
- » **Green goddess:** ½ avocado, 1 c blueberries, 1 c spinach, 1 Tbsp chia seeds, 1 scoop collagen and 1 c coconut water
- » **Strawberry coconut:** 1 c chopped strawberries, ½ c riced cauliflower, ¼ c plain yogurt, 1 Tbsp honey, 1 Tbsp hemp seeds, ½ tsp pure vanilla extract, and 1 c coconut milk

These smoothie packs are convenient for breakfast on the go and the perfect vehicle to sneak in some veggies for picky eaters—vegetables like spinach, zucchini, cucumbers, and cauliflower are virtually undetected in smoothies. Simply blend one up when you're ready to enjoy.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add the ingredients (excluding the liquid) into freezer-safe bags or containers, and store in the freezer for up to 3 months.
2. When you're ready to enjoy, dump the frozen contents into a high-speed blender, add the liquid, and blend until smooth. Add more liquid as needed to reach your desired consistency.

High-Protein Dill Pickle Chicken Salad

This salad comes together in minutes with the help of a fully cooked rotisserie chicken. It's full of flavour, made with only a handful of ingredients, and hardy enough to enjoy both on its own and as a fun dip served with pita chips or crackers. This portable filling lasts in the fridge for three to four days and is versatile enough to enjoy in a multitude of ways, making it perfect for meal prep.

SALAD INGREDIENTS

- » 1 rotisserie chicken, shredded (or use tofu or cannellini beans for a vegan-friendly option)
- » 2 ribs celery, diced
- » 1 spring onion, diced
- » 1 c diced dill pickles

CREAMY DILL DRESSING INGREDIENTS

- » 1 c plain Greek yogurt or cottage cheese
- » 1 tsp dried dill
- » ¼ c pickle brine
- » 1 tsp honey
- » 1 clove garlic, minced
- » ½ tsp smoked paprika
- » 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- » ½ tsp sea salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add the salad ingredients to a large bowl and mix to combine.
2. Blend dressing ingredients in high-speed blender until smooth.
3. Pour the dressing over the chicken salad and toss to combine, making sure that everything is well-coated in the dressing.

Healthy Snack Boxes

Store-bought processed snacks are often full of excess sugar, sodium, and unwanted ingredients. While they may be convenient to have on hand for packed lunches, pre-workout, or after-school activities, it's easy to prep a healthy snack option at home.

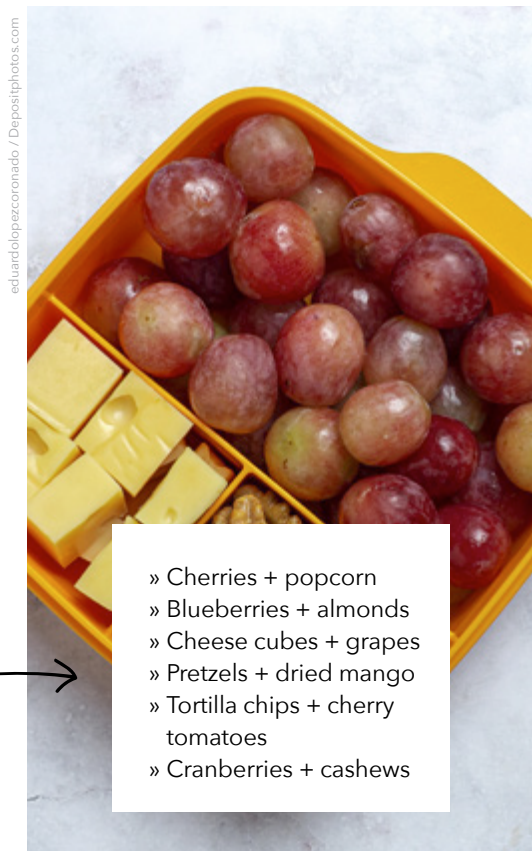
Explore a variety of different tastes and textures with these balanced snack boxes. Prep a few options at the start of your week or the night before and store them in the fridge for optimal freshness. Try different combinations weekly and satisfy your sweet and savoury cravings.

Whether you're a busy parent with kids returning to school or you're looking for healthy eating inspiration, these meal prep recipes not only taste delicious but are also designed to make it easy to stick to a weekly routine.

SERVES
4-6



Monika Grabkowska / Unsplash



eduardlopezcoronado / Depositphotos.com

- » Cherries + popcorn
- » Blueberries + almonds
- » Cheese cubes + grapes
- » Pretzels + dried mango
- » Tortilla chips + cherry tomatoes
- » Cranberries + cashews



sablinstanslav / Depositphotos.com

No-Bake Brownie Bites

What's a packed lunch without a sweet treat? These brownie bites are sweet and chewy and taste just like a freshly baked brownie—but without the oven. The hardest part will be trying to eat just one.

INGREDIENTS

- » ½ c cacao powder
- » ½ c cashew butter
- » 3 Tbsp pure maple syrup
- » 4 Tbsp coconut milk
- » ½ tsp pure vanilla extract
- » ¼ c dark chocolate chips
- » Pinch salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add all ingredients to a bowl and mix well to combine.
2. Add milk as needed to get the dough to the right consistency.
3. Wet your hands before rolling into 1-inch balls. For added flavour, you can even roll them in a topping of your choice, like leftover cacao powder.
4. Store in the fridge or freezer. 🍴

6-8
BALLS



PRANA
Cacao Powder

Organic, Plant-Based

NUTS TO YOU
Smooth Cashew Butter

Non-GMO,
Gluten-Free



BENEFITS BY NATURE
Organic Coconut Milk

Non-GMO

PASCHA
Organic Dark
Chocolate Chips

Sugar-Free,
Soy-Free



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THE HEALTHY KITCHEN

BRAIN-BOOSTING RECIPES
TO NOURISH YOUR BODY & MIND

Angela Moscarelli, RHN

SERVES
1



Olivie Straus / Unsplash+



Illustration: Luisvv / Depositphotos.com

Blueberry Brain Booster Smoothie

This vibrant purple smoothie is packed with powerful antioxidants and nutrient-dense foods to provide the optimal brain-boosting snack or on-the-go breakfast. Regular consumption of blueberries, strawberries, and blackberries has been linked to improved memory and delayed brain aging.² Berries contain flavonoids and antioxidants that protect the brain from oxidative stress as well as inflammation.³ Leafy greens like spinach, kale, and collards are rich in nutrients that support healthy brain cells.¹ The added protein from the yogurt and healthy fats from the avocado make this smoothie ultra creamy and nutritionally balanced!

INGREDIENTS

- » 1 c roughly chopped kale, stems removed
- » ¾ c frozen blueberries
- » ½ avocado
- » ½ c plain Greek yogurt
- » 1 Tbsp hemp seeds
- » ½-1 c water

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add ingredients to a high-speed blender and blend until smooth.
2. Add water as needed to reach your desired consistency.

Meal prep tip: Add the ingredients (except water) to a freezer-safe bag or container and store in the freezer. When you're ready to enjoy, add the contents of the bag to a high-speed blender along with ½ cup of water to start.



Broccoli-Cheddar Frittata

Perfect for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, this broccoli frittata will be a weekly meal-prep staple. Broccoli is rich in vitamin K, lutein, folate, and beta-carotene, which are all important nutrients shown to slow cognitive decline.⁴ Eggs are a good source of choline, essential for producing a neurotransmitter called acetylcholine, which is involved in learning and memory.⁵ This makes 6-8 servings perfect for meal prep or feeding a crowd. Enjoy as-is or serve with salad or crusty sour-dough bread.

INGREDIENTS

- » 10 large free-range eggs
- » 2 c cooked broccoli, chopped
- » ¼ c milk
- » 1 c shredded aged cheddar cheese
- » ¾ tsp sea salt
- » ½ tsp garlic powder
- » Cracked black pepper to taste
- » Spring onions or chives, chopped (*optional*)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Grease a 9x13 oven-safe glass baking dish and set aside.
2. Add eggs, milk, salt, garlic powder, and pepper to a large bowl and whisk to combine.
3. Stir in chopped cooked broccoli and cheddar cheese and pour into the greased baking dish. Make sure everything is evenly spread out.
4. Bake in the oven for approximately 30 minutes or until the center of the frittata is firm.
5. Remove from the oven once the frittata is cooked all the way through.
6. Cut into squares and sprinkle the top with chopped green onion or chives, if using.



tashka2000 / Depositphotos.com

SERVES
6-8



belchonock / Depositphotos.com

Illustration: Javanesia45 / Depositphotos.com



Juan Jose Valencia Antif / Unsplash+



fodio / Depositphotos.com Illustration: dasey / Depositphotos.com

MAKES
2
CUPS

Crunchy Nutty Topping

Why do walnuts look like brains? It turns out they have a real nutritional link to brain health! Nuts and seeds, including walnuts, offer healthy fats, protein, and vitamin E, which help maintain the integrity of our brain cells and improve cognitive performance.⁶ This crunchy topping is made with nutrient-dense nuts and seeds and is the perfect alternative to overpriced, store-bought granola or salad topper. Raw nuts and seeds are used for maximum nutritional value as they preserve more vitamin E, B vitamins, and antioxidants, which are heat-sensitive nutrients.⁷ There are no added sweeteners or salt in this recipe, which makes it versatile for sweet or savoury dishes. Sprinkle on top of yogurt, smoothie bowls, oatmeal, salads, soups, or stews to add crunch and brain-boosting nutrients.

INGREDIENTS

- » ½ c chopped walnuts
- » ½ c chopped almonds
- » ½ c sunflower seeds
- » ½ c pumpkin seeds
- » ¼ c hemp seeds
- » Cinnamon, coconut sugar, or dried fruit (*optional, if you want sweet*)
- » Dried oregano, garlic powder, or black pepper (*optional, if you want savoury*)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add all the ingredients to a large bowl and stir to combine.
2. Store in a glass jar in the fridge for optimum freshness.



Illustration: Odrik / Depositphotos.com

Honey-Balsamic Salmon Salad

Light and fresh, yet hearty enough to be a meal on its own. The balance of sweet and tangy makes this dish irresistible. Every ingredient is intentional and fuels the body and the mind: Salmon is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential for building brain and nerve cells.⁸ Crisp baby spinach is the perfect backdrop for this salad and supports a healthy brain. Avocado adds a creamy element while providing vitamin K and folate, which help to prevent blood clots and enhance memory and concentration.⁹ Beets are delicious and nutrient dense. They contain properties that improve blood flow to the brain, enhancing mental performance.¹⁰ This salmon salad is perfect for entertaining guests or a flavourful weeknight dinner treat!

INGREDIENTS

- » Salmon fillet (6-8 oz)
- » 3 c baby spinach
- » ½ c pickled beets, chopped
- » 1 avocado, cubed
- » Chopped walnuts or 1-2 Tbsp crunchy nutty topping (recipe on page 46) (*optional*)

HONEY-BALSAMIC DRESSING

- » ½ c balsamic vinegar
- » ¼ c extra virgin olive oil
- » 3 Tbsp raw honey
- » 1 tsp dried oregano
- » 1 tsp sea salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add all the dressing ingredients into a measuring cup and mix to combine.
2. Add the salmon to a parchment-lined baking tray and coat with 1-2 tablespoons of the dressing.
3. Broil the salmon for 10-15 minutes, 3-4 inches from the heat. The salmon should flake easily with a fork when ready.
4. Add spinach to a bowl and toss with 2 tablespoons of the dressing. Divide between 2 bowls.
5. Arrange the salmon, beets, and avocado in the bowls and drizzle with another 1-2 tablespoons of the dressing. Sprinkle with chopped walnuts or crunchy nutty topping, if desired. 🍴

For references visit ecoparent.ca/ELV/FALL26



Art Rachen / Unsplash+

SERVES
2



belchenock / Depositphotos.com

Brain-Boosting Tip:
Combine brain foods together with physical activity and adequate sleep for maximum cognitive benefits, improved mood, and focus.

Illustration: luisw / Depositphotos.com

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- Each tablet provides 12.5 billion CFU from a combination of proprietary strain probiotics: *Lactobacillus acidophilus* (CUL-60 & CUL-21), *Bifidobacterium animalis* subsp. *lactis* (CUL-34), & *Bifidobacterium bifidum* (CUL-20)
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As students of all ages head back to school, their days quickly fill with classes, homework, sports, extracurricular activities, and hours spent on digital devices. To help meet these demands, students need proper nutrition and that's where Easymulti® Teen and Total Vision Care™ can help.

Fuel Growing Minds with Easymulti® Teen

Designed for teenagers, Easymulti® Teen provides comprehensive nutritional support during one of life's most important growth stages. Busy schedules and less-than-ideal food choices can make it difficult for teens to get all the nutrients they need.

It features DHA to support brain health, B vitamins for energy and mood balance, vitamins C and D to support immune health, and calcium and magnesium to help build strong bones and teeth. Biotin and zinc help support healthy, clear skin, giving teens the nutritional foundation they need to thrive throughout the school year.

Protect Eyes in a Digital World

From online coursework to social connections, post-secondary students spend more time on screens than ever. Prolonged screen use can contribute to digital eye strain, dry eyes, headaches, and blurred vision. Total Vision Care™ is an antioxidant-rich formula designed

to help nourish and protect eye health. Building on the recommendations of the AREDS2 study, it combines lutein and zeaxanthin with bilberry, grape seed extract, alpha lipoic acid, and omega-3 fatty acids to help maintain eyesight and support eye health in today's digital age.

What Sets Platinum Naturals Apart

Easymulti® Teen and Total Vision Care™ use Platinum Naturals' award-winning Omega Absorb™ delivery system to enhance nutrient absorption throughout the body. With clean formulas made without unnecessary fillers, artificial colours or preservatives, they help provide the nutritional support needed throughout the school year.

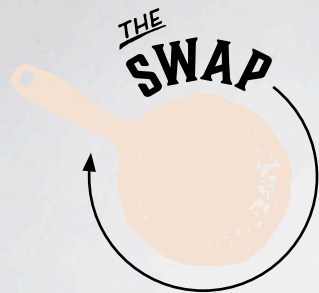
Set Them Up for Success

This school year, help support students' nutritional needs. Easymulti® Teen provides nutrients for energy, focus, mood, and healthy growth, while Total Vision Care™ offers targeted eye health support for older students who spend long hours reading, studying, and using digital devices.

Together, they help support students in the classroom, on campus, and beyond.



Absorb more with healthy oils



PASTA VS. RICE NOODLE BOWL

**TREAT YOURSELF TO NOODLES
THAT NOURISH!**

Pasta dishes can be comforting and satisfying, but many traditional versions can leave you feeling bloated and sluggish afterward. Because they're often low in fibre and protein, these meals can also lead to blood sugar spikes and energy crashes, especially when eaten on their own without enough nutrients to support digestion and balance.

TRADITIONAL CHOICE:

Traditional pasta dishes are often made with refined white flour and rich, heavy sauces that digest quickly and can lead to energy crashes and increased cravings later on. These meals are typically lower in fibre and may lack enough nutrient diversity to support balanced digestion, which can contribute to bloating and digestive discomfort, especially when eaten regularly.

THE SWAP:

Swapping a traditional pasta dish for a nourishing rice noodle bowl gives you the same cozy comfort while supporting steadier energy, digestion, and overall nourishment. Rice noodles are lighter and often easier to digest, helping reduce that heavy, overly full feeling many people experience after traditional pasta meals. Bone broth adds protein, collagen, and minerals that support gut health, fullness, and more stable blood sugar, helping prevent the energy crashes and cravings that can come from refined-carb-heavy meals. Seaweed brings important minerals like iodine and magnesium to support overall wellness while adding more nutritional diversity to the dish. Carrots provide fibre and antioxidants to support digestion and slow blood sugar spikes, while edamame adds plant-based protein and fibre to help keep you satisfied and energized for longer.

Together, this bowl creates a more balanced meal that supports stable energy, digestion, fullness, and nourishment—without sacrificing comfort or flavour.

Maria D'Alessandro, RHN

*A healthier
you is just
a simple
swap away.*



RICE NOODLE BOWL

Ingredients

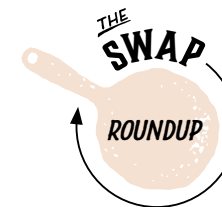
- » 1 pack rice noodles
- » 500 ml bone broth
- » Taco seasoning, to taste
- » 1 carrot, shredded
- » ¼ c edamame, cooked and shelled
- » 2 sheets seaweed, chopped or torn

Instructions

1. Cook the rice noodles according to package instructions and set aside.
2. In a pot, warm the bone broth over medium heat and stir in the Siete taco seasoning.
3. Add the shredded carrot and let simmer for 3-5 minutes until slightly softened.
4. Add the cooked rice noodles to the broth and stir gently to combine.
5. Top with edamame and chopped seaweed before serving. 🌱

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 20 minutes

**SERVES
2**



THAI KITCHEN
Thin Rice Noodles

Vegan, Gluten-Free

BENEFITS BY NATURE
Chicken Bone Broth
with Turmeric

Non-GMO



SIETE
Mild Taco Seasoning

Non-GMO,
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GIMME
Organic Premium
Roasted Seaweed

Roasted in Avocado Oil



THE FAMILY TABLE

SIMPLE FALL RECIPES FOR
MEANINGFUL FAMILY MOMENTS

Olivia Buckley, CNP, ECE



Getty Images / Unsplash+

As the excitement of a new school year begins, so do the busy schedules, packed lunches, homework, and after-school activities. It's easy for family meals to become just another item to check off the list, but this season offers the perfect opportunity to be intentional about gathering around the table.

The kitchen is the heart of the home, and some of the most meaningful family moments begin long before dinner is served. Inviting children to help prepare meals teaches valuable life skills, builds confidence, and creates opportunities for conversation, laughter, and connection. Whether they're washing vegetables, measuring ingredients, or setting the table, every family member can play a part.

Being intentional with mealtimes doesn't mean creating elaborate dinners every night. It means making space to slow down, share a meal, and reconnect after a busy day. These simple moments around the table help strengthen family bonds and create traditions that children will carry with them for years to come.

To start the school year off right, I'm sharing three easy family-friendly recipes that everyone can make together. They're simple enough for busy weeknights, fun for little helping hands, and a wonderful reminder that the best ingredients in any meal are the memories made along the way.



Fall 2026

Harvest Sheet-Pan Chicken & AUTUMN VEGETABLES

Celebrate the flavours of the season with this wholesome one-pan meal. This recipe brings the warmth and comfort of autumn while remaining simple and practical for busy school nights. It's a wonderful way to invite the whole family to cook together, reconnect after a busy day, and enjoy a meal made with love.

SHEET-PAN INGREDIENTS

- » 2 tsp garlic powder
- » 2 tsp dried thyme
- » 2 tsp smoked paprika
- » 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- » 1 lb Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved
- » 1 large red onion, cut into wedges

- » 3 Tbsp olive oil
- » 8 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- » 1 tsp sea salt
- » ½ tsp freshly cracked black pepper
- » 1 honeycrisp apple, cored and cubed
- » ½ c roasted pine nuts (*optional*)
- » Goat cheese, crumbled (*optional*)
- » Flat-leaf parsley, chopped (*optional*)

MAPLE-DIJON DRESSING INGREDIENTS

- » 3 Tbsp Dijon mustard
- » 2 Tbsp pure maple syrup
- » 2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar

- » 2 Tbsp olive oil
- » 1 garlic clove, finely minced
- » Pinch of salt and pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Preheat the oven to 425°F and line a large baking sheet with unbleached parchment paper.
- 2 Combine spices in a bowl and set aside.
- 3 In a large bowl, combine sweet potatoes, Brussels sprouts, and red onion. Drizzle with olive oil and half of the spice mixture. Toss until evenly coated, then spread onto the prepared baking sheet.
- 4 Season the chicken with salt and pepper and the rest of the spice mixture, then arrange them among the vegetables. (Tip: For best caramelization, give the vegetables plenty of room on the pan—overcrowding traps steam.)
- 5 Roast for 20 minutes, then remove the pan from the oven. Add the apple chunks, gently tossing them with the vegetables, and return the pan to the oven for 15–20 minutes, or until the chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165°F and vegetables are golden and caramelized.
- 6 While everything roasts, whisk together the Dijon mustard, maple syrup, apple cider vinegar, olive oil, garlic, and salt and pepper until smooth.
- 7 Transfer the roasted chicken and vegetables to a serving platter and drizzle generously with the maple-Dijon dressing. Top with roasted pine nuts, crumbled goat cheese, and finely chopped parsley if desired. Serve with quinoa, rice, or a mixed-greens salad.

SERVES
4-6

Jez Timms / Unsplash.com

Family Table Tip:

Give everyone a job! Little ones can wash the vegetables, older kids can help measure the dressing ingredients, and everyone can arrange the vegetables on the pan. Cooking together makes dinner feel like a family event, not just another task.

Abhishek Hajare / Unsplash.com



SERVES
6-8

Liu's Chunky Chicken Soup

This hearty chicken soup is more than just an easy weeknight dinner—it's an invitation to slow down, work together, and make mealtime a meaningful part of your family's rhythm, one bowl at a time. Filled with wholesome ingredients that are as nourishing as they are delicious, this is the perfect fall family meal.

INGREDIENTS

- » 2 Tbsp grass-fed butter
- » 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- » 3 medium carrots, peeled and sliced
- » 3 celery stalks, sliced
- » 2 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- » 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- » 1 tsp dried thyme
- » 1 tsp dried oregano
- » 3 bay leaves
- » Salt and pepper to taste
- » 8 c organic chicken bone broth
- » 2 organic chicken breasts
- » 1 c frozen peas
- » 2 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- » ½ lemon, freshly squeezed

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat the butter over medium heat in a large soup pot or Dutch oven.
2. Add the onion, carrots, and celery. Cook for 6-8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables begin to soften. While this is cooking, rinse chopped potatoes until water runs clear.
3. Stir in the garlic and cook for 30 seconds until fragrant, then add the potatoes, thyme, oregano, bay leaves, and a generous pinch of salt and pepper.
4. Pour in the chicken bone broth and bring the soup to a light boil.
5. Season the chicken breast with salt and pepper and add to the pot. Cover and cook for 20-25 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked. Remove the cooked chicken breast and chop into cubes, then add it to the soup with frozen peas. Simmer for 8-10 minutes until everything is heated through.
6. Remove the bay leaves and stir in the chopped parsley and freshly squeezed lemon juice.
7. Taste and adjust seasoning with additional salt and pepper before serving. Serve with garlic bread, buttered biscuits, or homemade dinner rolls.



fotogal / Unsplash+



elena.hramova / Depositphotos.com

Family Table Tip:

Set out all the ingredients buffet-style and let everyone build their own parfait, making breakfast both interactive and enjoyable. Children love choosing their layers and toppings. These small moments of connection can help create a positive start to the day and become meaningful family traditions.

SERVES
4-6

Apple Crisp Yogurt Parfait

Whether you're preparing breakfast before school, packing an afternoon snack, or enjoying a delicious dessert after dinner, this parfait comes together quickly and is easy for the whole family to make together.

CRISP TOPPING INGREDIENTS

- » 1 c old-fashioned rolled oats
- » ¼ c chopped pecans or walnuts (optional)
- » 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- » ½ tsp cinnamon
- » 2 Tbsp melted grass-fed butter

PARFAIT INGREDIENTS

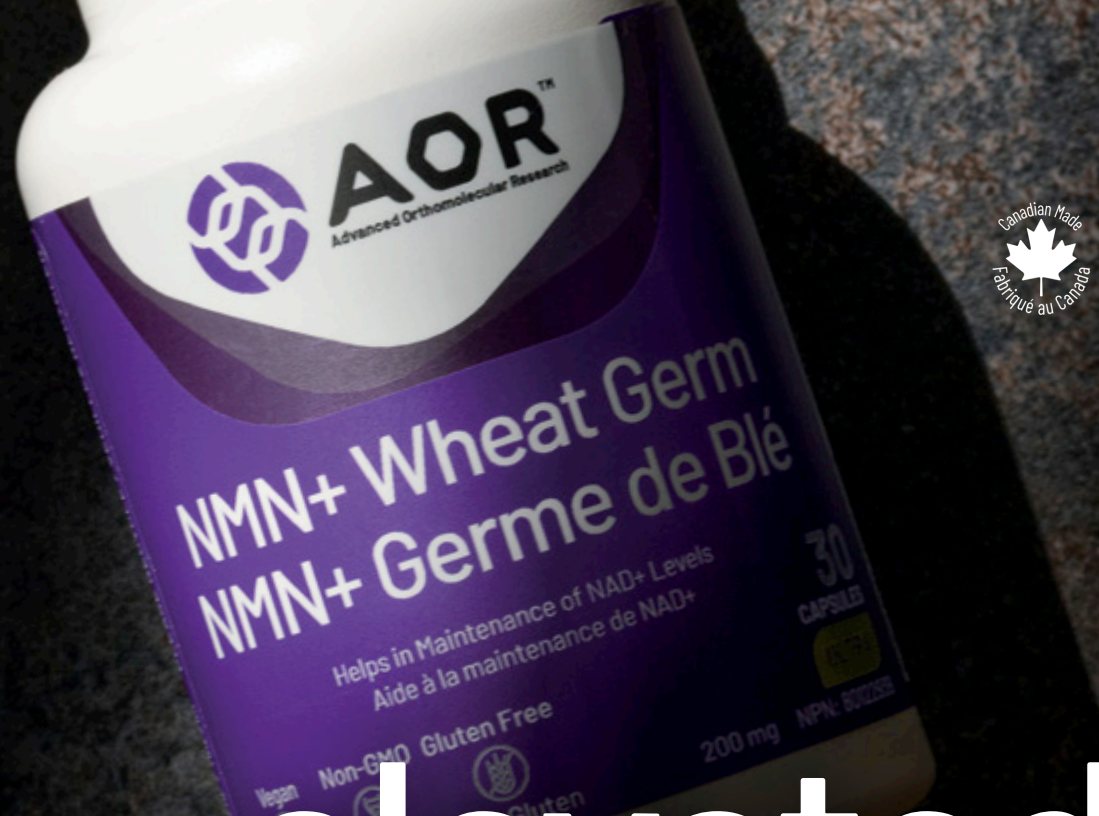
- » 1 Tbsp grass-fed butter
- » 2 medium apples, peeled (if desired) and diced
- » 1 Tbsp pure maple syrup or raw honey (plus extra for drizzling)
- » 1 tsp cinnamon (plus extra for sprinkling)
- » ½ tsp real vanilla extract
- » Pinch of sea salt
- » 3 c vanilla or plain Greek yogurt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. To make the crisp topping, preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Combine the oats, nuts, brown sugar, cinnamon, and melted butter in a bowl.
3. Spread onto a baking sheet lined with unbleached parchment paper and bake for 8-10 minutes, stirring half way through, until golden and fragrant. Allow to cool completely.
4. Start the cinnamon apples by melting the butter in a skillet over medium heat.
5. Add the diced apples, maple syrup, cinnamon, vanilla, and a pinch of sea salt and cook for 5-7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the apples are tender but still hold their shape.
6. Remove from heat and let cool slightly.
7. To assemble, spoon a layer of Greek yogurt into each serving glass or bowl, followed by a layer of the warm cinnamon apples. Sprinkle generously with the crisp topping. Repeat the layers until the glasses are full.
8. Finish with a final sprinkle of the crisp topping, a drizzle of honey, and a dusting of cinnamon. 🍯

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L I V E T H E H E A L T H Y L I F E ®



DID YOU KNOW?

Pumpkin

More Than Just a Fall Favourite!

Quinn Carlan, CNP

Each autumn, pumpkins take centre stage in our homes, cafes, and holiday celebrations. When most people think of pumpkin, they picture pumpkin spice lattes, Thanksgiving pie, and front porches lined with glowing orange gourds. While pumpkin has certainly become a symbol of the fall season, its story goes back thousands of years, and its health benefits extend far beyond its role in holiday traditions.

HISTORY

Pumpkins are one of the oldest cultivated crops in the Americas, with evidence suggesting they’ve been grown for thousands of years. Indigenous peoples throughout North and South America relied on pumpkin as an important food source. They often roasted it over open fires or dried it for later use. Fun fact: Even the word “pumpkin” has an interesting history, evolving over centuries from the Greek word *pepon*, meaning “large melon.”¹

When European settlers arrived in North America, pumpkin quickly became a staple in the kitchen. It was used in everything from soups and breads to desserts, and one of the earliest versions of pumpkin pie involved filling a hollowed-out pumpkin with milk, honey, and spices before baking it in hot ashes. Over time, pumpkin became closely tied to fall harvest celebrations, Thanksgiving traditions, and eventually Halloween.

HEALTH BENEFITS

In addition to its long history as a staple food, pumpkin provides a variety of nutrients and bioactive compounds that support overall health.

Immune System Support

Pumpkin is an underrated food when it comes to immune system support, largely because of its beta-carotene content.

Beta-carotene is converted into vitamin A, which is essential for immune system function, skin health, and vision. Vitamin A supports the integrity of your body’s barrier systems, such as the gut lining and respiratory tract, which are your body’s first line of defence against pathogens. On top of that, the antioxidant activity of carotenoids helps reduce oxidative stress in the body, which is something that can accumulate during periods of inflammation or demand on the immune system.²

Blood Sugar Balance & Healthy Digestion

Pumpkin offers a nice combination of fibre and naturally occurring carbohydrates. The fibre content helps to slow digestion, which supports a more gradual release of glucose into the bloodstream rather than a sharp spike. This is one of the reasons pumpkin can feel quite stabilizing in meals: it supports more steady energy and can help with satiety after eating. From a digestion perspective, fibre also supports regular bowel movements and contributes to overall gut health by feeding beneficial gut bacteria.³

Cardiovascular & Metabolic Health Benefits

Pumpkin also plays a role in cardiovascular and metabolic health, mainly through its combination of potassium, fibre, and antioxidant compounds. Potassium is a key mineral involved in fluid balance and blood pressure regulation, and adequate intake has been linked with better cardiovascular outcomes.

When combined, the fibre and carotenoids in pumpkin offer a range of nutrients that support a broader metabolic picture, including blood sugar regulation and protection against oxidative stress over time. From its roots as an ancient staple crop to its place on modern tables, pumpkin continues to offer meaningful nutritional benefits and remains a simple, versatile food that can support long-term cardiovascular and metabolic health as part of a balanced diet.⁴ 🌱

For references visit ecoparent.ca/ELV/FALL26

Pumpkin Bread

This moist and flavourful pumpkin bread is the perfect way to enjoy the cozy flavours of fall while adding a boost of fibre and nutrients to your day!

WET INGREDIENTS

- » 2 eggs
- » 1 c canned pumpkin purée
- » ¼ c extra virgin olive oil
- » ¼ c almond milk
- » ¼ c pure maple syrup
- » 1 tsp vanilla extract

DRY INGREDIENTS

- » 1 c oat flour
- » ½ c almond flour
- » 2 tsp Ceylon cinnamon
- » 2 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- » ½ tsp sea salt
- » 3 tsp baking powder

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a loaf pan and line it with parchment paper.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, combine all of the wet ingredients and whisk until smooth and well incorporated.
3. Add all dry ingredients (except baking powder) and mix until just combined. Gently fold in the baking powder, being careful not to overmix.
4. Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan and bake for 45-50 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the centre comes out with just a few moist crumbs attached.
5. Allow the loaf to cool in the pan for at least 10 minutes before slicing and serving. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 3 days or in the refrigerator for up to 6 days.

DID YOU KNOW?

Roundup



FARMER'S MARKET

Organic Pumpkin Purée

–Kosher–



MAISON ORPHÉE

Extra Virgin Olive Oil

–Cold Extracted,
B Corp Certified–



CARRICK BROS

Organic Maple Syrup

–Made in Algonquin, ON–



BOB'S RED MILL

Whole Grain Oat Flour

–Gluten-Free–



Magnesium (glycinate)

ESSENTIAL SUPPORT FOR A HEALTHIER YOU!

Discover the benefits of our highly bioavailable magnesium formula. Supports muscle function, nutrient metabolism, and electrolyte balance. Made with hypoallergenic, vegan ingredients. Suitable for diverse dietary needs. Experience the difference today!

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FROM THE GROCERY AISLE

BACK-TO-SCHOOL FUEL SMART BREAKFASTS & SNACKS FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

Start the new school year off strong with nourishing breakfasts to keep kiddos feeling fuller longer and snacks that sustain their energy and focus from the first bell to the last. These nutrient-packed foods and quick grab-and-go favourites make it easy to fuel every school day with confidence.



NON-GMO,
GLUTEN-FREE



DAIRY-FREE



PEANUT-FREE, NO
ADDED SUGAR OR SALT



HIGH IN FIBRE & OMEGA-3S



ECOCERT CERTIFIED



ALLERGY-FRIENDLY,
KOSHER



HIGH IN PROTEIN,
GLUTEN-FREE



PLANT-BASED,
NO ADDED SUGAR

NO ADDED SUGAR,
GLUTEN-FREE



VEGAN,
GLUTEN-FREE



— YOUR BREAKFAST, — POWERED BY NATURE

Meet the morning dream team. Start with our hearty **Organic Rolled Oats**, supercharge them with a sprinkle of **Hemp Hearts** and **Organic Black Chia Seeds**, and finish with a generous drizzle of pure **Organic Maple Syrup**. Whether you're flipping pancakes or simmering porridge, it is proudly Canadian fuel for a serious morning.

