



Does This Make My Brain Look Fat?

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Actually, your brain IS fat. A lot of people don't realize it, but about 60% of our brain is actually made of lipid, the fancy name for fat. This lipid makes a covering that allows the electrical impulses in the brain to travel quickly, like insulation on a wire. Without this lipid covering, our brains wouldn't work.

It's no surprise that most of the growth, development and maturation of our brains happens during childhood. So, the fats that our kids eat as fetuses, infants, toddlers and children are the fats that will be used to make up the brain cells that they will use for the rest of their lives.

I don't know about you, but if I'm building something that needs to hold up well for 70, 80, 90 or 100 years, I want to make it out of REALLY GOOD material. Why build something out of cardboard and plywood when you can use brick and 2 x 4s?

Unfortunately, not all fats are equally good brain-building material. Omega-3 fats are the highest quality for brain-building (I've sung the praises of Omega-3 rich foods in an earlier newsletter) and the worst quality fats for brain-building are trans fats. If we have many types of fats plentifully available to our bodies, the body will use the best ones to build the brain cells. If the most abundant fat in the body, however, is trans fat – then the brain cells will be built with that. This would be like using the plywood and cardboard for a permanent structure.

Many adults know that trans fats are bad for heart health, etc. But I think many adults don't worry about their kids eating trans fats because the kids are too young to be at risk for things like heart disease. In fact, as bad as trans fats are for adults, I worry MUCH MORE about children consuming them. This is because they are in the process of building the brains they will need for the rest of their lives!

I intentionally wanted to share this information as we approach back to school time. As your children head back to the world of packed lunches and quick after-school snacks, please read the labels. If an item contains ANY partially hydrogenated oils (trans fat), then it should be avoided. Many products have removed these ingredients, but they are still in A LOT of foods, especially pre-packaged foods. Other than reading labels for partially hydrogenated oils, also watch out for deep fried foods from restaurants. Often the oil used for the frying is partially hydrogenated because it is less expensive.

It can be tough to tell kids that there are certain foods they can't eat, but if you imagine the concept of a brain built from cardboard – it helps make it easier to put your foot down. Some tough love now will help your child's brain to be sharp and fast for the next 75 or 100 years!

Dr. Whitehead is a family chiropractor in Mooresville. Her office, Advanced Spinal Fitness, provides comprehensive chiropractic wellness care for the whole family. Find out more at www.AdvancedSpinalFitness.net.