The kitchen staple supporting your family's brain health

The evidence linking eggs to better brain health is growing.

When we think of "brain food," we often look toward expensive supplements or exotic ingredients. However, new research published in the Nutrition Bulletin suggests that one of the most powerful tools for cognitive health is already sitting in most Kiwi fridges.[1]

According to UK author and nutrition expert Dr Emma Derbyshire, eggs contain a specific combination of nutrients, including DHA, choline, and folate, that are more effective when consumed together than in isolation.

"We now know that key nutrients for the brain... often do not work in isolation, which is why the combination naturally found in eggs is so powerful," she explains. This "unique blend" is what makes the egg a natural, unprocessed vessel designed to start and sustain life.

The first 1,000 Days: Building the foundation

The most critical "window of opportunity" for brain development begins at conception and continues through the first 1,000 days of a child's life.[2] During this stage, Derbyshire notes, the brain requires specific building blocks such as protein, iodine, and vitamins A, B12, and D, all of which are found naturally in eggs.

One standout nutrient is choline, often referred to as a "wonder ingredient" for its role in neurodevelopment. Research indicates that two medium eggs can provide 80% of the recommended daily intake (RDI) for pregnant women.[3] This is particularly important because research suggests typical choline intakes among New Zealand women of childbearing age are substantially lower than advised.[4]

One analysis in Derbyshire's new review found that regular intake of eggs and choline during pregnancy was positively associated with foetal brain maturation by 36 weeks. For babies transitioning to solids, Whānau Āwhina Plunket advises that well-cooked, pureed, or mashed eggs can be introduced from around six months, providing an early source of these essential nutrients.[5]

The second Window: Childhood and adolescence

Brain development doesn't stop in infancy; tissue in the central nervous system continues to develop through to age 20.[6] Adolescence is now regarded by many experts as a "second window of opportunity" for cognitive growth.[7] The new review highlights that egg consumption in early life is linked to a wide range of positive outcomes, including better fine motor development, language acquisition, and social skills.

For school-aged children, the benefits may extend into the classroom. The research suggests that the array of brain nutrients in eggs is associated with higher verbal performance and better academic achievement.[8] By providing a nutrient-dense option for breakfast or lunch, families can help maintain their children's cognitive development and support the signalling networks the brain uses every day.

Protecting the golden years

As we age, the focus shifts from development to maintenance. A 2025 systematic review published in the Journal of Nutrition, Health & Aging reports that moderate egg consumption–roughly three to seven eggs per week–is associated with better cognitive outcomes in older adults.[9]

Specifically, this level of consumption is linked to a slower rate of memory decline and a reduced risk of cognitive impairment.[10] As eggs are easy to digest and use, they serve as a practical way for aging New Zealanders to nourish their brains and protect their independence into the future.

Practical nutrition for every whānau

While the science is compelling, the "real world" benefit of eggs often comes down to practicality. New Zealand nutrition expert Elaine Rush, Emeritus Professor of Nutrition at AUT, notes that many families are currently balancing the need for high-quality nutrition with the realities of cost and time.

"Eggs are quick to cook, highly nutritious, incredibly versatile, and great value," she says. Whether it is a quick boiled egg for a school lunch or a shared family meal, eggs provide an accessible way to nourish and care for whānau.

By incorporating eggs into a balanced diet, Kiwis can take a simple, natural step toward supporting brain health at every stage of life.

For recipe inspiration and more information on the benefits of eggs, visit **eggs.org.nz.**

[1] *Derbyshire E (2026) Eggs and Associated Nutrients: Implications for Brain Development and Function From Conception to Early Adulthood: A Narrative Review. Nutrition Bulletin 0: 1-21. Available at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nbu.70042*

[2] *Christifano, D., and L. Bennett. 2023. "Early Life Nutrition and the Developing Brain." Journal of Family Practice 72: S25–S30.*

[3] *NHMRC & Ministry of Health (2006; rev. 2017). Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand. Executive summary. Canberra and Wellington.*

[4] *Mygind VL, Evans SE, Peddie MC, Miller JC, Houghton LA. Estimation of usual intake and food sources of choline and betaine in New Zealand reproductive age women. Asia Pac J Clin Nutr. 2013;22(2):319-24. doi: 10.6133/apjcn.2013.22.2.19. PMID: 23635379.*

[5] *Plunket. (n.d.). Introducing solid foods. Whānau Āwhina Plunket. Retrieved September 10, 2025, from https://www.plunket.org.nz/caring-for-your-child/feeding/solids/introducing-solid-foods/*

[6] *Giedd, J. N., J. Blumenthal, N. O. Jeffries, et al. 1999. "Brain Development During Childhood and Adolescence: A Longitudinal MRI Study. "Nature Neuroscience 2: 861–863*

[7] *Saavedra, J. M., and A. M. Prentice. 2023. "Nutrition in School-Age Children: A Rationale for Revisiting Priorities." Nutrition Reviews 81:823–843*

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] *Sultan N, Kellow NJ, Tuck CJ, Cheng E, MacMahon C, Biesiekierski JR. Egg intake and cognitive function in healthy adults: A systematic review of the literature. J Nutr Health Aging. 2025 Dec;29(12):100696. doi: 10.1016/j.jnha.2025.100696. Epub 2025 Oct 7. PMID: 41061594; PMCID: PMC12538690.*

[10] *Ibid.*