

'Hunger hormone' may also boost growth of brain cells

Could fasting boost your brainpower? A stomach hormone that stimulates appetite seems to promote the growth of new brain cells and protect them from the effects of ageing – and may explain why some people say that fasting makes them feel mentally sharper.

When ghrelin was first discovered, it became known as the hunger hormone. It is made by the stomach when it gets empty, and whenever we go a few hours without food its levels rise in our blood.

But there is also evidence that ghrelin can enhance cognition. Animals that have [reduced-calorie diets have better mental abilities](#), and ghrelin might be part of the reason why. Injecting the hormone into mice [improves their performance in learning and memory tests](#), and seems to boost the number of neuron connections in their brains.

Now [Jeffrey Davies](#) at Swansea University, UK, and his team have found further evidence that ghrelin can stimulate brain cells to divide and multiply, a process called neurogenesis. When they added the hormone to mouse brain cells grown in a dish, it switched on a gene known to trigger neurogenesis, called fibroblast growth factor.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Hungry stomach hormone promotes growth of new brain cells](#)

For more background on the Genetic Literacy Project, read [GLP on Wikipedia](#)