

Best Smart Drugs 2018: Are Nootropics 'Genius Pills' That Make You Smarter?

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This world is a competitive place. If you’re not seeking an advantage, you’ll get passed by those who do. Whether you’re studying for a final exam or trying to secure a big business deal, you need a definitive mental edge. Are smart drugs and brain-boosting pills the answer for cognitive enhancement in 2018? If you’re not cheating, you’re not trying, right? Bad advice for some scenarios, but there is a grain of truth to every saying—even this one.

When 2011 Hollywood blockbuster movie *Limitless* hit theaters, the smart drugs industry erupted. Smart pills and nootropics aren’t new. But, *Limitless* fueled the industry’s growth by taking biohacking mainstream.

If you haven’t seen the movie, imagine unfathomable brain power in capsule form. Picture a drug from another universe. It can transform an unsuccessful couch potato into a millionaire financial mogul. Ingesting the powerful smart pill boosts intelligence and turns you into a prodigy. Its results are instant. Sounds great, right? If only it were real.

Can a ‘Genius Pill’ Make You Smarter?

The movie *Limitless* was quite farfetched. That still didn’t stop people from scouring every corner of the internet for pills that make you smarter. Students, entrepreneurs, and the Silicon Valley elites threw caution to the wind. The search for the next experimental brain boosting miracle drug began.

The renowned “genius pill” from the movie is the [limitless pill NZT-48](#). Even though it was fictional, at least the pill had a cool name. Smart drugs like NZT do not exist as portrayed in the movie. For now, you’ll have to find another way to become the next Albert Einstein.



The truth is, taking a smart pill will not allow you to access information that you have not already learned. If you speak English, a smart drug cannot embed the Spanish dictionary into your brain. In other words, they won't make you smarter or more intelligent. We need to throttle back our expectations and explore reality. What advantage can smart drugs provide? Brain enhancing substances have excellent health and cognitive benefits that are worth exploring.

Truth About Smart Pills & Nootropics

Smart pills and nootropics for brain function support exist in various forms. Most of them are effective in boosting specific areas of mental cognition. For example, there are many [supplements for memory](#) that improve information recall. These nootropics are ideal for both young adults and an elderly population.

You'll find several supplements that can enhance focus, energy, creativity, and mood. These brain enhancers can work very well, and their benefits often increase over time. Again, nootropics won't dress you in a suit and carry you to Wall Street. That is a decision you'll have to make on your own. But, smart drugs can provide the motivation boost you need to make positive life changes.

Best Smart Drugs List 2018

Regardless of your goal, there is a supplement that can help you along the way. Below, we've put together the definitive smart drugs list for peak mental performance. There are three major groups of smart pills and cognitive enhancers. We will cover each one in detail in our list of smart drugs. They are natural and herbal nootropics, prescription ADHD medications, and racetams and synthetic nootropics.

1. Natural & Herbal Nootropics

Natural and herbal nootropics are by far the safest and best smart drugs to ingest. For this reason, they're worth covering first. Our recommendation is always to stick with [natural brain fog cures](#). Herbal remedies for enhancing mental cognition are often side-effect free. These substances are superior for both long-term safety and effectiveness. They are also well-studied and have deep roots in traditional medicine.



Natural nootropic supplements derive from various nutritional studies. Research shows the health benefits of isolated vitamins, nutrients, and herbs. By increasing your intake of certain herbal substances, you can enhance brain function. Below is a list of the top categories of natural and herbal nootropics. These supplements are mainstays in many of today's best smart pills.

Amino Acids

For proper brain function, our CNS (Central Nervous System) requires several amino acids. These derive from protein-rich foods. Consider amino acids to be protein building blocks. Many of them are dietary precursors to vital neurotransmitters in our brain. Epinephrine (adrenaline), serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine assist in enhancing mental performance. A few examples of amino acid nootropics are:

- Acetyl-L-Carnitine
- [L-Theanine](#)
- L-Tyrosine
- [GABA \(gamma-Aminobutyric acid\)](#)

- 5-HTP

Except for L-Tyrosine, the other amino acids mentioned contain anxiolytic properties. This benefit helps regulate our moods. None of these are genius pills per se. But these supplements will support brain health under a variety of every-day circumstances. Thus, amino acids are commonplace to many smart drugs and [mood enhancing supplements](#).

B Vitamins

Deficiencies in B vitamins can cause memory problems, mood disorders, and cognitive impairment. B vitamins will not make you smarter on their own. Still, they support a wide array of cognitive functions. Most of the B complex assists in some fashion with brain activity. Vitamin B12 (Methylcobalamin) is the most critical B vitamin for mental health.

Studies show that B vitamin supplements can protect the brain from cognitive decline. These natural nootropics can also reduce the likelihood of developing neurodegenerative diseases. The prevention of Alzheimer's and even dementia are among the many benefits. Due to their effects on mental health, B vitamins make an excellent addition to any smart drug stack.

Choline

Any nootropic substance that enhances acetylcholine (ACh) synthesis is a cholinergic supplement. Acetylcholine is the neurotransmitter in the brain responsible for supporting learning and memory. Even a small improvement in our brain's ACh production can have a profound impact on cognition.

Many of the best smart pills contain a natural [choline supplement](#) such as Alpha GPC. These nootropics boost memory and enhance information processing within the brain. They can also shield the brain from cognitive decline. Examples of choline sources are:

- Lecithin
- DMAE
- Choline Bitartrate
- CDP-Choline (Citicoline)
- [Alpha GPC \(Choline Alfoscerate\)](#)

Alpha GPC has the highest bioavailability of all the choline supplements. This characteristic allows it to cross the blood-brain barrier and boost acetylcholine production. The other choline sources listed have low bioavailability. Thus, they are less effective at increasing cognitive function.

Fatty Acids

Fatty acids are well-studied natural smart drugs that support many cognitive abilities. They play an essential role in providing structural support to cell membranes. Fatty acids also contribute to the growth and repair of neurons. Both functions are crucial for maintaining peak mental acuity as you age. Among the most prestigious fatty acids known to support cognitive health are:

- Omega-3 fish oil (EPA and DHA)
- [Phosphatidylserine \(PS\)](#)
- [Coconut Oil \(MCT Oil\)](#)

Omega-3's and phospholipids have a significant impact on focus and concentration. We know fatty acids support mental well-being and brain function. But these nootropic supplements also benefit the physical body in several ways. These benefits include mood support and reduced bodily inflammation.

When taking fish oil and Phosphatidylserine (PS) together, a synergistic effect occurs. Studies show a compounding effect further improving cell-to-cell communication in the brain. This benefit is ideal for controlling symptoms of ADHD. It also works well for boosting memory and studying capabilities.

Herbal

The smart pill industry has popularized many herbal nootropics. Most of them first appeared in Ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine. Ayurveda is a branch of natural medicine originating from India. It focuses on using herbs as remedies for improving quality of life and healing ailments. Evidence suggests our ancestors were on to something with this natural approach.

Several herbal supplements can enhance cognitive function and provide neuroprotection to the brain. The most well-researched herbal smart drugs in today's top nootropic stacks are:

- Ashwagandha
- Ginkgo Biloba
- Bacopa Monnieri
- [Huperzine A](#)
- St. John's Wort
- Vinpocetine
- [Rhodiola Rosea](#)
- Panax Ginseng

Their mechanisms of action vary, but each has a profound impact on memory, mood, and mental energy. Many of these substances are also popular herbal remedies for

the treatment of ADHD. Studies prove they can reduce the likelihood of developing neurodegenerative diseases as well.

Caffeine is not an herb, but it deserves mention since it derives from herbal teas and coffee beans. Caffeine is a natural stimulant that improves brain power and energy levels. If you're sensitive to caffeine intake, we recommend taking it with L-Theanine. This way you'll enjoy smooth, long-lasting energy without the crash and jitters.

2. Prescription ADHD Medications

There are many prescription drugs used to treat ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder). It's important to note the following statement. Our list of the best smart pills only includes ADHD meds for educational purposes. Their inclusion is not an endorsement for their off-label use as cognitive enhancers.

Modafinil, Armodafinil, and Adderall are among the most potent wakefulness promoting agents. But they are prescription drugs for a reason. Handle them with caution under the supervision of a medical professional.



A common misconception is that Adderall and Modafinil are genius pills. Will they make you smarter or more intelligent? Not exactly. While they can enhance productivity, they are not miracle drugs.

As mentioned earlier, [natural Adderall alternatives](#) are always the best choice. These brain supplements improve mental acuity, memory, and energy. Herbal smart drugs are also safer for long-term consumption. They are reliable for use in children, adults, and seniors. Only take prescription ADHD medications if nothing else works for you.

Modafinil (Provigil)

Modafinil, known under brand name Provigil, is a prescription eugeroic (wakefulness promoting agent). Doctors prescribe Modafinil to treat a variety of fatigue-related disorders. The drug can promote the release of many neurotransmitters in the brain. These include histamine, norepinephrine (noradrenaline), glutamate, and GABA.

This mental stimulation is what increases focus and attention span in the user. The FDA permitted treatments for Modafinil include extreme sleepiness and shift work disorder. It can also get prescribed for narcolepsy, and obstructive sleep apnea. Modafinil is not FDA approved for the treatment of ADHD. Yet, many medical professionals feel it is a suitable Adderall alternative.

When taken as prescribed, Modafinil is safer than Adderall with fewer side effects. Smart pill enthusiasts find a heightened sense of alertness and motivation with Modafinil. In healthy individuals, Modafinil will reliably [boost energy levels](#). If you find that it gives you headaches, add a choline supplement to your stack. With that said, you should only use Modafinil in moderation on an as-needed basis.

Armodafinil (Nuvigil)

Nuvigil is the brand name for the generic drug, Armodafinil. The nootropic community views this smart drug as a superior form of Modafinil. Here's why: Modafinil contains an R-enantiomer and an S-enantiomer. Studies suggest the S-enantiomer is ineffective for cognition and may even be useless.

The mental stimulation, alertness, and cognitive enhancement come from the R-enantiomer. Armodafinil contains only the R-enantiomer. Thus, it's twice as powerful for improving focus and mental performance. Like Modafinil, Armodafinil prescriptions treat disorders related to extreme fatigue.

Amphetamines (Adderall)

If you've spent any time researching genius pills or smart drugs, then you've heard of Adderall. This cognitive enhancing psychostimulant is the most prescribed medication to treat ADHD. Adderall also works well for narcolepsy.

The problem with Adderall arises from its chemical makeup. It is an amphetamine. The amphetamine classification means Adderall shares a scary amount of similarities to methamphetamine. Better known as meth, this dangerous street drug is highly addictive and often deadly.

Adderall has a higher risk of addiction and dependency issues compared to Modafinil. This is because Adderall floods the brain with an exorbitant amount of dopamine. The unnatural rush may cause a drop-off in regular dopamine production.

All the prescription ADHD medications mentioned above can be habit forming if abused. Adderall can cause irreversible harm to your central nervous system. This impairment can lead to severe depression and anxiety. With many natural options available, Adderall is one smart pill to avoid.

3. Racetams & Synthetic Nootropics

Most diehard nootropic users have considered using racetams for enhancing brain function. Racetams are synthetic nootropic substances first developed in Russia. These smart drugs vary in potency, but they are not stimulants. They are unlike traditional ADHD medications (Adderall, Ritalin, Vyvanse, etc.). Instead, racetams boost cognition by enhancing the cholinergic system.

Acetylcholine can have a large impact on enhanced neuroplasticity and memory retention. It can also increase [focus](#) and [concentration](#) and improve mental performance. In contrast, ADHD medications often flood the brain with dopamine and serotonin.



Due to the synthetic nature of racetams, you won't find them in many of the best smart pills on the market. The intentional exclusion is not because racetams are ineffective. Instead, the vast majority of users trust natural smart drugs more. The idea of using a synthetic substance to alter your brain's operating system is a big turn off for most people. With synthetic nootropics, you're a test subject until more definitive studies arise.

Piracetam

A quick search for drugs that make you smarter will lead you to the discovery of piracetam. Piracetam is the first synthetic smart drug of its kind. All other racetams derive from Piracetam. Some are far more potent, but they may also carry more side effects. Piracetam is an allosteric modulator of acetylcholine receptors. In other words, it enhances acetylcholine synthesis which boosts cognitive function.

Piracetam is a reliable [supplement for improving creativity](#). It is an entry level racetam due to its lack of severe side effects and relative subtlety. Piracetam's effects take hold over time through continual use. There is less instant gratification compared to other brain enhancers. Additionally, this nootropic can enhance holistic thinking, verbal memory, and mental energy levels.

Aniracetam

Anecdotal evidence suggests Aniracetam is about five times stronger than Piracetam. Its effect on enhancing mental cognition may not be for everyone. This synthetic nootropic substance is an AMPA modulator. Aniracetam improves the response of AMPA receptors. The receptor optimization improves sensory perception, learning, and memory function.

Smart pills containing Aniracetam may also improve communication between the brain's hemispheres. This benefit makes Aniracetam supplements ideal for enhancing creativity and stabilizing mood. But, the anxiolytic effects of Aniracetam may be too potent for some. There are reports of some users who find that it causes them to feel unmotivated or sedated. Though, it may not be an issue if you only seek the anti-stress and anxiety-reducing effects.

Phenylpiracetam

Phenylpiracetam (Phenotropil) is one of the best smart drugs in the racetam family. It has the highest potency and bioavailability among racetam nootropics. This substance is almost the same as Piracetam; only it contains a phenyl group molecule. The addition to its chemical structure improves blood-brain barrier permeability. This modification allows Phenylpiracetam to work faster than other racetams. Its cognitive enhancing effects can last longer as well.

Phenylpiracetam is a large upgrade over other racetams. It may be up to 60 times stronger than its little brother Piracetam. This synthetic brain booster can even improve physical performance. Its effects are not limited to enhancing cognitive function. For this reason, the Anti-Doping Agency banned Phenylpiracetam for use in Olympic competition.

Animal studies have also discovered other possible benefits of Phenylpiracetam smart pills. Phenylpiracetam seems to provide enhanced neuroprotection for the

brain. One possible treatment includes reducing the severity of epileptic seizures. It may also prevent the onset of retrograde amnesia.

Noopept

Omberacetam (N-phenylacetyl-L-prolylglycine ethyl ester) is a synthetic brain enhancing chemical. First developed in Russia, it is better known by the brand name Noopept. This smart drug is well known for improving neurotransmission speed and efficiency.

Research suggests Noopept may assist cognitive restoration for Alzheimer's patients. The neuroprotective and regenerative properties of Noopept show significant promise. Studies prove Noopept may be able to reverse trauma-induced brain damage. It can lessen oxidative stress and has potential to reverse cell death.

In our list of synthetic smart drugs, Noopept may be the genius pill to rule them all. Up to 1000 times stronger than Piracetam, Noopept may not be suitable for everyone. This nootropic substance requires much smaller doses for enhanced cognitive function. There are plenty of synthetic alternatives to Adderall and prescription ADHD medications. Noopept may be worth a look if you want something powerful over the counter.

Final Thoughts on Nootropics, Smart Drugs, and 'Genius Pills'

Genius pills that make you smarter and more intelligent do not exist. But there are many natural and herbal smart drugs in 2018 for cognitive enhancement. Nootropics are capable substances for improving memory, focus, concentration, and cognition.

Using prescription ADHD medications, racetams, and other synthetic nootropics can boost brain power. Yes, they can work. Even so, we advise against using them long-term since the research on their safety is still new. Use them at your own risk. For the majority of users, stick with all [natural brain supplements](#) for best results. What is your favorite smart pill for increasing focus and mental energy? Tell us about your favorite cognitive enhancer in the comments below.

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

~ Albert Einstein

Thanks for reading!

Leave a comment below!

