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Wellness Matters

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Your Wellness Journey

March is National Nutrition Month

March is National Nutrition Month, making it a great time to assess your nutrition and ensure you're serving your mind and body well.

Enhancing Mental Health With Nutrition

Some people who are managing mental health conditions may turn to food to self-soothe or find emotional support—others may avoid or limit food intake. These choices can create discomfort for the brain and exacerbate pre-existing feelings. Fortunately, increased mental strain can be remedied by making different—and healthier—food choices. A healthy mind and body are essential elements in coping with mental health issues or other related conditions.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, only 1 in 10 adults eats the recommended amount of fruits or vegetables, so you may need to strive to eat more of those essential food groups.

Regardless of if you're battling a mental health condition, fruits and vegetables are crucial for maintaining good health. In addition, health experts suggest adding the following into your diet to help improve mental health:

- Fermented foods like kimchi, miso, kombucha, kefir, and yogurt



- Omega-e fatty acids, including salmon, flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, avocado, and olive oil
- Spices like turmeric, oregano, rosemary, ginger, and garlic
- Green, chamomile, and herbal teas
- Vitamin D, found in fortified milk, eggs, mushrooms, and salmon

Tips for Healthy Cooking

The way you cook your food can make a big difference in its nutritional value.

- Go easy on fat, sugar, and salt when preparing foods. You don't need to leave out all the fat, sugar, or salt—just limit the amount you use.
- Flavor foods with herbs, spices, and other low-fat seasonings, instead of using rich sauces or gravy. Experiment with different seasonings to find unique combinations that you or your family enjoy.
- Opt for homemade dessert to save money and make it healthier. When you are baking yourself, you can use sugar substitutes and other tricks to make it more nutritious.
- Remove skin from poultry before cooking to lower the fat content.

Protecting Your Vision

If your eyes feel healthy, it's easy to assume they are healthy. However, many eye diseases don't have warning signs. Additionally, your risk for some eye diseases increases with age. Fortunately, early detection and timely treatment can be successful and cost-effective in the long run.

Here are practical ways you can protect your vision:

- **Get a regular exam.** Complete eye exams consist of tests designed to evaluate your vision and check for eye diseases.
- **Wear protective eyewear.** When playing sports or doing a task that requires eyewear, wear glasses or goggles to prevent an eye injury.
- **Put your shades on.** Wearing sunglasses shields your eyes from the sun's harmful rays. Don't forget to put them on when you're outside!
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking can contribute to irreversible eye diseases, so quit or refrain from smoking to protect your eye health.
- **Give your eyes a break.** Staring at a computer screen for too long can cause painful eye strain. Try giving yourself a short break from looking at the screen whenever possible or consider blue light-blocking glasses.

If you have concerns about your vision, talk to an eye care professional.



Healthy & Nutritious

Increasing Nutrient Absorption

Did you know that some nutrients aren't optimally absorbed if you eat them on their own? Instead, they need to be paired with other nutrients for your body to get the most value out of them. Fortunately, that's as simple as eating certain food combinations together.

Nutritionists recommend the following food pairings to aid in the best nutrient absorption:

- **Beans and rice:** Beans and chickpeas are packed with protein and fiber, which can balance out starches like rice. When eaten together, they can help prevent blood-sugar spikes and energy crashes.
- **Leafy greens and avocado:** Healthy fats (e.g., avocado, olive oil, and salmon) can increase the absorption of carotenoids in plants. These nutrients are essential for healthy eyes, skin, and immune systems. Healthy fats are a great way to dress up salads and get essential nutrients.
- **Citrus and green tea:** Green tea is rich in epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), which is associated with increased metabolism and reduced inflammation. When paired with citrus, such as orange or lemon, your body can better absorb EGCG.
- **Fish and broccoli:** Vitamin D and calcium are good for your bones, but they're even stronger together. Consider plating calcium-rich broccoli with fish high in vitamin D, such as salmon or tuna.

10 Foods to Boost Eye Health



Broccoli



Brussels sprouts



Dark, leafy greens



Eggs



Lean meat and poultry



Red bell peppers



Salmon



Squash



Sweet potatoes



Sunflower seeds