

Wellness Matters

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The Connection Between Diet and Mental Health

Good nutrition is essential not only for physical health but also for mental well-being. The foods you eat profoundly influence your mood, cognitive function, and ability to manage stress. A healthy, well-balanced diet can help you think clearly and be more alert. It can also improve concentration and attention span. Just as foods can impact mental health, your mental well-being can affect the kinds of foods you eat.

Embarking on a journey toward a healthy, balanced diet begins with simple yet impactful steps. Here are some ways to empower yourself to make sustainable dietary changes that can benefit your mental health:

- **Be thoughtful about your meals.** Start by planning your meals ahead of time. Incorporate various foods rich in the vitamins and minerals your mind needs, such as omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, folate, vitamin D, and magnesium.
- **Swap processed foods for whole foods.** Aim to include more whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. These foods are

often more nutrient-dense compared to processed foods.

- **Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Proper hydration is essential for overall health and can influence mood and cognitive function.
- **Listen to your body.** Pay attention to how different foods make you feel. Keep a food journal to track what you eat and how you feel afterward. This can help you identify foods that boost your mood and energy levels.

The foods you eat can significantly impact your mental health and emotional state. Eating a nutrient-rich diet low in processed sugar and saturated fat can increase your focus, improve your cognitive function, and decrease your risk for mental illnesses.

March is National Nutrition Month, so it's a great time to ensure you're eating well for your body and mind. For further nutrition guidance or support, contact a registered dietician.

The Benefits of Talk Therapy

Talk therapy, also known as counseling, can be a powerful tool for managing the mental and emotional challenges you may encounter in life. People seek therapy for a variety of reasons, whether it's navigating the loss of a loved one or simply managing daily stressors.

Talking to an unbiased professional about mental health concerns or stressors can help you navigate your problems, find solutions, and learn how to cope with distress. Talk therapy offers several benefits, including the following:

- **Treatment for mental health conditions**—Talk therapy is proven to be an effective treatment for various mental health conditions (e.g., depression, anxiety, phobias, and addiction) as well as past or present trauma.
- **Emotional support**—Therapy offers a safe space to discuss emotional problems with a trusted professional who can help you navigate difficult feelings.
- **Healthy coping strategies**—A therapist can teach effective coping strategies for stress and emotional distress.
- **Improved relationships**—In therapy, you can work

through relationship challenges. You can also learn how to improve your communication.

- **Personal growth**—Therapy helps you recognize negative or unhelpful patterns of thoughts or behaviors, enabling you to make positive changes while facilitating personal growth and healing.
- **Stress management**—Stress can come from everyday life, significant life events, and major transitions like divorce or the death of a loved one. A therapist can help you navigate these difficult times and provide an outlet to express your thoughts and feelings.

While talk therapy can certainly alleviate symptoms of such conditions and help with emotional distress, it's OK to try therapy at any point. Seeing a therapist before you need mental or emotional support could make it easier to deal with difficult situations that may arise in the future.

Contact a mental health professional for further guidance.

Veg out



Vegetables contain essential vitamins, minerals, fiber and other natural substances that may help prevent chronic diseases.

How much do you need per day?

Children: 1 to 2 ½ cups ♦ Teens: 2 to 3 cups ♦ Adults: 2½ to 3 cups

What counts as a cup?

1 large ear of corn ♦ 2 large stalks of celery ♦ 1 medium potato ♦ 1 large bell pepper ♦ 2 cups of raw greens ♦ 1 large sweet potato ♦ 12 baby carrots ♦ 2 medium carrots ♦ 10 broccoli florets ♦ 1 cup of tofu cubes ♦ 8 slices red onion