INSIDE HEALTH

A PATIENT GUIDE

HOW DIET SHAPES MOOD, MIND & BEHAVIOR

Nutrition for *Mental Health*

The nutrients, gut signals, and modern foods that quietly influence depression, anxiety, and clarity of mind.

SEVEN PAGES

For Patients

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CHAPTER ONE

Does our diet affect our mental & emotional health?

Many people believe that diet has little to do with mental or emotional health. Yet hundreds of research studies prove that nutrient deficiencies and imbalances adversely affect the way we think and feel.

After all, the brain and the nervous system are integral parts of our physical bodies and need to be nourished, just like the other organs. With a healthy body and brain, we can produce the endorphins and other biochemicals compounds needed to feel optimistic, happy, balanced and focused. These "feel-good" chemicals not only equip us to become high functioning individuals able to cope with the stresses of daily life, but also help those who've suffered psychological wounds and traumas.

LOW BLOOD SUGAR. One important factor in dealing with mental illness is low blood sugar (hypoglycemia). When our blood sugar drops lower than it should be, we can feel anxious, nervous, depressed and angry. Excitotoxins that kill neurons are produced during hypoglycemia. Daily binging on sugar not only causes low blood sugar; it also repeatedly releases dopamine, a feel-good chemical, in the brain; this eventually results in fewer dopamine receptors and a need for greater amounts of sugar to feel good. To prevent low blood sugar it is important to eat good quality animal protein and animal fat at every meal, and to never skip meals. When we eat sugar, especially between meals or on an empty stomach, we are likely to experience low blood sugar an hour or two later. If you do like to eat sweet things, have them at the end of a meal, and eat them in moderation. If you feel hungry between meals, it is best to eat something like cheese, eggs, meat or nuts, not a candy bar or pastry. These nutrient-dense foods will help keep our blood sugar stable—putting us on an even keel, both physically and emotionally.

THE GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION. Scientists and health practitioners have discovered that good health, including mental health, begins in the gut. When we have plenty of beneficial gut flora, these microorganisms produce feel-good chemicals that help our brains function properly. When the intestinal tract is populated by an overgrowth of candida and pathogenic fungi, these microorganisms produce neuro-toxins that can cause everything from attention deficit disorder (ADD) to autism. Also, when the gut is "leaky," undigested proteins and compounds that have drug-like effects get into the bloodstream, often causing symptoms of mental illness. Very often a return to stable mental health involves adopting a diet that can heal the gut and repopulate the digestive tract with friendly microorganisms, such as the GAPS (Gut And Psychology Syndrome) diet. Genetically modified foods, antibiotics, chlorinated and fluoridated water, and concentrated sweeteners can destroy beneficial gut bacteria. Lacto-fermented foods rich in beneficial bacteria and gelatin-rich bone broth can help heal the gut and repopulate it with good bacteria.

CHAPTER ONE, CONTINUED

Thyroid function & the vegetarian diet.

THYROID DISORDERS & MENTAL HEALTH. Poor thyroid function can result in psychiatric disturbances. People with an overactive thyroid may be anxious, tense, moody, impatient, irritable, depressed and unable to concentrate. In extreme cases, they may appear schizophrenic, losing touch with reality and becoming delirious or hallucinating. People with an underactive thyroid may lose interest and initiative, have slow mental processes and memory, and suffer from depression and paranoia. In these cases, treatment of the thyroid disorder is vital to restoring mental health. Iodine and vitamin A are key nutrients for healthy thyroid function.

VEGETARIAN DIET. A vegan or vegetarian diet is often lacking in nutrients that support mental health, such as vitamins A, D and B12, and minerals like zinc and iron. Studies show that vegans and vegetarians suffer more depression and anxiety than those who include meat and other animal products in the diet.



CHAPTER TWO

Nutrient deficiencies and mental illness.

VITAMIN A	Helps us deal with stress and produce feel-good chemicals; it also help us stay focused and complete tasks. Best sources are liver, cod liver oil, butter and egg yolks.
VITAMIN D	Deficiency is associated with depression, schizophrenia and chronic mental illness. Best sources are cod liver oil, fatty fish and lard, butter and egg yolks from animals raised outside in the sunlight.
VITAMIN B1 *Thiamine*	Plays an important role in nerve function. Deficiency leads to beri beri; symptoms of deficiency include numbness in hands and feet, mental confusion and speech difficulties. Best sources are fish, pork, nuts and grains.
VITAMIN B3 *Niacin*	Deficiency results in pellegra with the "4 D" symptoms of dermatitis, diarrhea, dementia and death. Best sources are meat and seafood.
FOLATE *Vitamin B9*	Deficiency, along with low levels of vitamin B12, can lead to schizophrenia. Best sources are leafy greens, vegetables and beans.
VITAMIN B6	Deficiency can cause confusion, depression and insomnia. Best sources are raw animal foods, such as raw milk, raw oysters and raw meat. Bananas are also a good source.
VITAMIN B12	Deficiency is strongly linked with psychiatric symptoms such as depression, irrational anger, obsessive-compulsive behavior and dementia. True B12 is found only in animal foods. Best sources are liver, meat and seafood.
VITAMIN C	Has been used successfully to treat symptoms of schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression and anxiety disorders. Best sources are fresh fruits and vegetables.
OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS	Low levels of the omega-3 fatty acids eicosapentanoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) closely tied to depression, impulsivity, schizophrenia, self-harm, aggression and dementia. Found in seafood, cod liver oil and grass-fed animal products.
ZINC	Deficiency is linked to depression; imbalanced zinc-to-copper ratio is linked to many mental health issues. Best sources are red meat, liver and shell fish.

CHAPTER TWO, CONTINUED

Cholesterol, glycine & the brain.

CHOLESTEROL	Is needed for the brain and for our "feel-good" chemistry. Low cholesterol levels are associated with depression and violent behavior. Cholesterol is found only in animal foods, especially animal fats and organ meats.
GLYCINE	An amino acid found in gelatin-rich homemade bone broth, regulates dopamine levels and helps with both depression and anxiety.

! **CHOLESTEROL-LOWERING DRUGS**

Many people take cholesterol-lowering drugs called statins (such as Lipitor, Lescol, Mevacor, Altoprev, Pravachol, Crestor, Zocor and Livalo) to lower their cholesterol levels. The problem is that we need cholesterol for many functions in the body, including the production of sex hormones and "feel-good" hormones. Side effects of cholesterol-lowering drugs include depression, anti-social behavior, irrational anger, memory loss, slowed reactions and suicide. It is not necessary to take cholesterol-lowering drugs. In women of all ages and in the elderly, higher cholesterol is associated with a longer life. Cholesterol levels over 300 mg/dL are a slight risk factor for men under age sixty. A diet free of processed foods and industrial vegetable oils is the best way to lower your risk of heart disease.



CHAPTER THREE

Modern diets and mental illness.

Many food products and beverages in the modern diet can affect the nervous system and lead to depression and mental illness:

REFINED SWEETENERS
Including sugar, high fructose corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juices, etc.

MODERN VEGETABLE OILS
Including hardened shortenings, margarines, spreads and liquid oils.

MSG
Often not labeled. Almost all processed foods contain MSG, even lowfat dairy products.

ADDITIVES
Including artificial dyes, flavorings and preservatives.

WHEAT
And other gluten-containing products, for those with gluten sensitivity, poor digestion and leaky gut.

SOY PRODUCTS
Depress thyroid function and block many nutrients important for mental health.

ASPARTAME
In Nutrasweet and Equal, is associated with panic attacks, depression, bipolar disorder, memory problems and other symptoms of mental illness.

GMOS
Genetically Modified Organisms can disrupt gut flora; the herbicide Round-Up used on GMOs is associated with a rise in autism.



CHAPTER THREE, CONTINUED

Drugs for mental illness.

Prescription drugs for mental illness, taken by about 20 percent of Americans, represents a business that brings in over seventy billion dollars yearly for the pharmaceutical industry. But Prozac, Xanax, Lexapro, Zoloft and other such drugs have serious side effects, including anxiety, panic, social phobia, depression and suicide. They can cause irritability, difficulty concentrating, anorexia, memory loss, fatigue, seizures, slurred speech, weakness, changes in libido, menstrual irregularities, incontinence and urinary retention. Most cause birth defects and pass into breast milk, yet they are often prescribed for pregnant and nursing mothers.



i **SOURCES & FURTHER INFORMATION**
westonaprice.org/health-topics/mental-health-flyer-references/

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