

how does diet and nutrition affect mental health?

food & mood

Mental health and nutrition are closely linked. The quality of food you eat can impact your overall physical and mental health.

Some foods can lift your mood, energy levels, and concentration, while others can have the opposite effect. Eating a balanced diet can give you more energy and help you concentrate and also provides us with the necessary nutrients to help us function and keep well.

Eating lots of foods which make your blood sugar rise and fall rapidly, such as sweets, biscuits, sugary drinks, and alcohol can decrease your mood.

Some types of medications can make you feel hungry or crave different types of foods. It is very important to continue to take your medication.

Speak to a Dietitian in conjunction with your doctor and case worker if you have any concerns.



The best foods for improving overall mental health:

- Colourful fruits and vegetables
- Wholegrains (rice, oats, bread, cereals)
- Legumes (lentils, chickpeas, beans)
- Fish
- Unsaturated fats (olive oil, nuts, seeds)



Tips for fuelling your brain:

- Eat a good breakfast to start your day right
- Eat regular and nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day
- Include carbohydrate, fat and protein at each meal
- Stay hydrated and drink plenty of water

choosing the right goals

There's more to healthy eating than just weight control. Being able to enjoy food without guilt or emotional torment, being able to listen to your body signals, finding pleasure in being active and looking after your overall physical health are important goals.

Measuring your weight on the scales is not a good way to judge success. Choose goals based on changing your behaviour or thinking.

No food is off-limits when you maintain a healthy diet – it's just a question of how often you eat it and how much of it you eat.

Who can I talk to?

To get individualised and up-to-date advice, ask your doctor for a referral to see an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD).

APDs are university-qualified professionals that undertake ongoing training and education programs. Dietitians have the knowledge and skills to give specific nutrition advice, ensuring that you receive tailored and credible nutrition information. For information on the guidelines, visit eatforhealth.gov.au.

Here are a few ideas that may appeal to you when you set your goals:

The food you eat:

- Nourish yourself well by eating a wide variety of foods from all food groups
- Choose lower fat, lower salt or higher fibre foods more often
- Eat regularly through the day, not skipping or skimping on meals
- Plan sensible snacks or healthy meals for when you are in a hurry
- Be flexible with eating, rather than following strict rules, but still achieve balance over the week

Healthy hunger – listening to your senses:

- Learn to listen to body signals, and recognise different levels of hunger and fullness
- Make time to sit, taste and enjoy foods

The guidelines:

- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes & fruits
- Eat plenty of cereals (preferably wholegrain)
- Include lean meat, fish poultry and/or alternatives (beans, pulses)
- Include milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives (soy products)
- Drink plenty of water (6-8 glasses a day)



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school or university wellbeing service or your local health provider.

For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit headspace.org.au



If you need immediate assistance call 000 or speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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headspace Adelaide is operated by Sonder. headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.