

Tools for Life – Weekly Health & Safety Meeting



Home Healthy - Home Safe

Date: April 2022

Food for Thought – Food and Mental Health

What we eat is as important for our mental health as our physical health. Recent studies show significant evidence that our diet can be linked to depression, dementia, schizophrenia, and ADHD.

Dr. Drew Ramsey is a nutritional psychiatrist. His passion is educating his patients and the public on the importance of eating foods that help our brains function optimally. He says “Mental health starts in our brain cells. We can make our brain cells more resilient, stronger, and better connected by feeding them well.” What do brain cells like to eat? Dr. Ramsey and other studies concur that a whole food diet that is rich in leafy greens, vegetables, fruits, olive oil, fish and seafood, nuts, and beans supports good brain health. Foods that do not support happy health brains are sweets and refined cereals, fried foods, fast food, processed meats, and sugary drinks.

Did you know?

People with schizophrenia have lower levels of good fats in their bodies and lower antioxidant enzymes in their brains than the general population.

“Dietary deficiencies of omega-3 fatty acids are associated with an increased risk of developing psychiatric disorders like depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, dementia, ADHD and autism.” Global Health Journal.

Heavy consumption of alcoholic beverages can cause deficiencies in brain health supporting vitamin B6, folate, thiamine, and vitamin A. Likewise, too much caffeine can also cause depletion of mental health nutrients like the B vitamins.

Gut health has been a new area of research and findings indicate that your gut bacteria can directly be correlated to mood changes and mental wellness. Ever receive news that made you nauseous? Butterflies in your stomach due to nervousness? These are all examples of the nerves that communicate with our brain that live directly in our intestinal tract.

Eating a whole foods diet that focuses on seafood, nuts, dark leafy greens, olive oil, nuts and beans, and a little dark chocolate can improve your mental health. When you or someone you know is feeling bad, ask yourself whether you have been eating enough of these foods.

HEALTHY OR SAFETY REMINDER: Did you know seasonal affective disorder (seasonal depression) results in individuals craving high sugar/high carb foods. Researchers believe that it is a brain’s reaction to try and increase dopamine levels by eating foods with high reward signals. Though these types of foods can lead to other side effects that are counterproductive for mental wellness when eaten frequently for long periods of time.

Discussion Points/Quiz Questions :

1. Do you find yourself craving different types of food based on mood ?