

Eating Well For Mental Health

Maxine Barish-Wreden M.D.,ABIHM

<https://www.sutterhealth.org/health/nutrition/eating-well-for-mental-health>

“Studies have shown that when people are eating the right foods a reduction in depression of 40 to 60 percent has been seen, which is a better outcome than most drugs,” Dr. Barish-Wreden says.

Stress and Depression

American Dietetic Association mentions that when depressed or stressed people tend to over or under eat.

When you eat too much you feel sluggish and can start to gain weight.

When you under eat it can lead to exhaustion.

These poor diets during stressful times or depression episodes will only make things worse and keep the cycle going.

To help fix the cycle and improve mental health:

Eat lots of fruits, vegetables, and foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids (like salmon)

Some specific brain foods include: Dark leafy greens, nuts, seeds, and legumes

A Healthy Gut

The gut is able to influence emotional behavior in the brain. In addition, the brain can alter the type of bacteria in the gut.

The American Psychological Association mentions that the gut bacteria produces neurochemicals that the brain uses to help regulate psychological and mental processes like mood.

It has been said that 95% of serotonin, the happy hormone, is produced by gut bacteria.

Stress can change the bacteria in the gut which can lead to changes in mood, which can lead to depression.

To help the gut:

Eating fruit, fiber, fish and fermented foods can help gut bacteria.

Mindful Eating

What to do:

Pay attention to how you feel when you eat.

Keep a food journal. Write down what you are eating and how you feel.

If you overeat when stressed. Stop what you are doing and write down how you feel. It might help you figure out what is really bothering you.

If you undereat, try eating 5-6 small meals rather than 3 large meals a day.

Stress and depression can sometimes be severe and can't be managed alone. If you are having difficulty managing your eating habits consider professional counseling.

Seeking help is not a sign of weakness or failure.

Brain Food

Healthy eating tips:

Stay away from processed food

Consume healthy fats like olive oil, coconut oil, or avocados

Have healthy snacks available

Prepare a healthy shopping list before hand and try to stick to what is on the list

Don't go food shopping while you are hungry

Avoid eating while watching TV, it can distract you and cause you to overeat