

DOES OUR DIET AFFECT OUR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

By Dr. Michael John Badanek, BS, DC, CNS, CTP, DACBN, DCBCN, MSGR./CHEV

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 biochemical 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 bingeing 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 neurotoxins 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 GAPS (Gut and Psychology Syndrome) diet. Genetically modified foods, antibiotics, chlorinated and fluorinated 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.

THYROID DISORDERS AND 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.

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 VEGETABLES Oils, including hardened shortenings, margarines, spreads and liquid oils.

MSG, which is often not labeled. Almost all processed foods contain MSG, even low fat 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.

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, and changes in libido, menstrual irregularities, incontinence and urinary retention. Most cause birth defect and pass into breast milk, yet they are often prescribed for pregnant and nursing mothers.

CHOLESTEROL LOWERING DRUGS

Many people take cholesterol lowering drugs called statin (such as Lipitor, Lescol, Mevacor, Altoprev, Prevacol, 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 “fee- 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.

Our office is a highly qualified facility capable of evaluating and treating patients. We pride ourselves in using the very best ancillary diagnostic facilities along with the specific products especially designed in addressing the health challenge(s) presented by our patients. Contact our office for a consultation regarding your health issues or concerns at 352-622-1151 or check us out at our websites at Dr. Badanek.com or alternativewholisitc.com