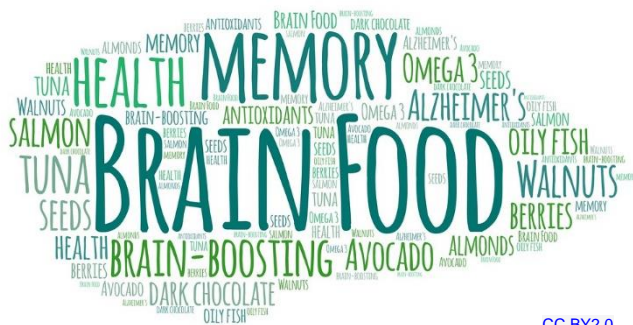


Nutrition Times

June 2020 Nutrition Services



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Nutrition & Mental Health

Social distancing has become a new part of our reality, and that comes with some serious impacts on mental health. While there are many things outside of our control, we can choose to practice self-care as often as we are able to – including nourishing our bodies with food that makes us feel good.

The food we eat can impact our mental wellbeing, and our mental wellbeing can impact the foods we choose to eat. This relationship can be observed in everyday life – after a bad day, it may feel harder to prepare nutritious meals. However, eating well is an important part of self-care as it can contribute to positive mood, behaviour and thinking patterns, and helps with cope with stress better.

Here are some ways healthy eating can promote positive mental health.

Follow Canada's Food Guide

Following Canada's Food Guide provides your body and your brain with the nutrients it needs to stay healthy. Aim to have half your plate vegetables and fruits, one quarter protein foods and one quarter whole grains.



Choose Whole Grain Foods

Whole grains provide carbohydrates, fibre and energy to your body. Carbohydrates are the preferred energy source of nerve cells, including those in the brain. Eating them throughout the day will give your body and brain the energy it needs to function. Whole grain foods include whole bread/buns, brown rice, quinoa, barley, whole grain pasta and more.



Have Plenty of Vegetables and Fruits

Vegetables and fruits contain important vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that support brain health. Antioxidants protect our cells from damage. Try brain boosting vegetables and fruits including fresh, frozen or canned dark leafy greens, orange vegetables, berries, citrus fruits and melons.



Eat Protein Foods

Proteins are the building blocks for neurotransmitters (natural brain chemicals, such as serotonin) which play a role in memory, sleep, appetite and feelings of wellbeing. Vitamin D and calcium, found mainly in dairy based protein foods, help neurotransmitters work in your brain. Protein foods include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, lentils, eggs, milk, yogurt and nuts.

Use Healthy Fats

35 per cent of the brain is made of polyunsaturated (healthy) fats. That's one of the reasons including small amounts of healthy fats in our diets is recommended. Healthy fats include fresh or canned salmon or tuna, flaxseed, walnuts, avocado, and vegetable oils.



Limit Caffeine

Limit coffee, tea, pop, energy drinks and other caffeine containing drinks to no more than 400mg caffeine, or two cups of coffee each day for an adult. Too much caffeine can contribute to poor sleep, irritability and nervousness. Make water your drink of choice.

Eat Regular Meals:

Food is the fuel for our bodies and brains. Eating regularly provides a sense of routine and can help keep you mood stable through the day. Try eating three meals and one to two snacks each day.

Cook and Eat Together:

Eat meals with family, friends or members of your household. If you must physically distance from others, try using your favourite video chat app to share a meal together virtually.

Resources:

For more healthy eating resources visit Canada.ca/FoodGuide or HealthyEatingStartsHere.ca

For mental health support call the Mental Health Help Line 1-877-303-2642 (toll free). If you require immediate help call 911 or visit the nearest emergency department.

Upcoming Nutrition Classes

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, nutrition classes will be offered online.

Prenatal Classes: Find out about important vitamins and minerals during pregnancy, food safety, prenatal weight gain and more! **Monday June 22, 2020 6-7 p.m.**

Infant Nutrition Classes: Information on feeding babies 0-12 months. **Monday June 15, 2020 and Thursday July 9, 2020 1:30-2:30 p.m.**

Toddler Nutrition Classes: Information on toddler nutrition and picky eating. **Tuesday June 9, 2020 2-3 p.m.**

Register for classes at szenutrition.eventbrite.com/

For nutrition information visit ahs.ca/nutrition. The Healthy Parents, Healthy Children website has information for expectant parents and parents of children on a variety of topics: <https://www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca/>

Contact

If you have questions, contact your local Registered Dietitian at Community Health Services:

Medicine Hat 403-502-8200

Brooks 403-501-3300

Lethbridge 403-388-6666

For more information on this or other nutrition topics, go to www.healthyeatingstartshere.ca

