

MENTAL HEALTH MINUTE



The Relationship Between Nutrition and Mental Health



The link between nutrition and mental health is becoming increasingly clear as research continues to show how profoundly food influences the brain. Nutrients affect everything from neurotransmitter production to inflammation levels, gut health and blood sugar stability. When these systems are supported, people often experience steadier moods, sharper thinking and better emotional resilience. While nutrition isn't a replacement for professional mental health care, it forms a powerful foundation that can enhance overall well-being and complement other forms of support.

Try the following nutrition tips to support a healthy mind:

- **Prioritize whole, minimally processed foods.** Choosing whole foods, such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains and lean proteins, can help stabilize blood sugar levels, which can prevent the mood swings and irritability that often follow highly processed meals. By reducing the intake of processed foods, you create a more stable internal environment that supports emotional balance.
- **Eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables.** Colorful produce is rich in antioxidants, which protect brain cells from oxidative stress, a process that can contribute to cognitive decline and mood disorders. Additionally, fruits and vegetables provide vitamins like folate and vitamin C, which are essential for the production of neurotransmitters such as serotonin.
- **Stay hydrated.** Proper hydration is essential for maintaining concentration, memory and overall cognitive function. Drinking enough fluids throughout the day can prevent the mental fatigue and emotional instability that often accompany dehydration.
- **Be mindful of caffeine intake.** Caffeine can be helpful in moderation, but excessive intake may disrupt sleep patterns and increase feelings of jitteriness or anxiety. Because sleep is essential for emotional regulation, too much caffeine can indirectly worsen mood. Being mindful of timing and quantity, such as avoiding caffeine late in the day, can help maintain balanced energy and support better mental health.

March is National Nutrition Month, so it's a great time to ensure you're eating well for your body and mind. For further nutrition guidance or support, contact a registered dietician.

Research Links the Use of AI With Depression and Anxiety

As artificial intelligence (AI) tools become embedded in daily life, a growing body of research is raising concerns about their potential impact on mental well-being. A [recent study](#) suggests that frequent or emotionally driven use of AI chatbots may be associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety and irritability among U.S. adults. While researchers emphasize that these findings show correlation rather than causation, the patterns have sparked questions about how people are using AI and what that means for mental health.

Given the emerging evidence, mental health professionals encourage mindful, balanced use of AI. Consider the following tips for using AI responsibly:

- **Avoid using AI as your primary source of emotional support.** General-purpose chatbots are not replacements for trained mental health professionals.
- **Be critical of AI-generated advice.** AI can make mistakes, misunderstand context or provide responses that are unhelpful or emotionally risky.

- **Use AI as a tool, not a companion.** Keep interactions task-focused (e.g., writing help, research summaries) rather than relationship-driven.
- **Check in with yourself emotionally.** Notice whether AI use leaves you feeling calmer, or more lonely, anxious or dependent.
- **Set time constraints.** Limit AI conversations during periods of stress to avoid habitual or compulsive use.
- **Seek human connections.** Prioritize talking with friends, family or colleagues when you need support. AI should supplement, not replace, human relationships.
- **Consult professionals when needed.** If you're experiencing persistent depression or anxiety, human clinical care remains the safest and most effective option.

As AI continues to evolve, researchers will continue to monitor its effects on daily life and mental health. If you are struggling with feelings of anxiety or depression, consider reaching out to a mental health professional who can offer guidance and support.

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