

At Project Food we are currently running a course about the link between the food we eat and how this makes us feel, mentally as well as physically. It's a wide ranging topic and there's a huge amount of information out there, so in this month's newsletter we're going to simplify things and give you the low-down on 'food and mood'.

With very best wishes,
Hannah and the Project Food team



PROJECT FOOD

A helping hand to healthy eating

Axminster Hospital
Chard Street
Axminster
EX13 5DU

01297 631782

info@project-food.org.uk

www.project-food.org.uk

Focus on... Food and Mood

Evidence suggests that good nutrition is just as important for our mental health as it is to our physical health. As well as impacting on shorter term mental health, the evidence indicates that food plays a important role in the development, management and prevention of specific health problems such as depression, ADHD and Alzheimer's disease.



Why and how has our diet changed?

The way the food manufacturing and production industry has developed over recent years, alongside lifestyle changes, has changed the way people eat. People's intake of fresh produce is generally far lower than it was 60 years ago and our intake of fat, sugar and additives is far higher, making for a much less healthy diet for many people.

Over the last 60 years there has been a 34% decline in UK vegetable consumption and people in the UK eat 59% less fish. This of course has had a big impact on the nutrients that people are consuming, and therefore an impact on our physical and mental health.

What can we do to help?

The most important thing is to eat a healthy balanced diet, but there are particular food groups which are important to our mental health.

There's more information about this over leaf, but Project Food can also help. If this is something you feel you could benefit from learning more about, please do get in touch by phone or email (contact details at the top of this page).



How you could make changes to the way you eat and improve your mental health

Reduce your intake of sugar and processed foods

Sugar, including foods that contain sugar, cause your blood sugar to rise rapidly, and then fall quickly as well. This can lead to energy and mood fluctuations. Instead opt for slow release energy foods such as wholegrains, nuts and seeds and proteins. A better breakfast than a bowl of sugary cereal would be a bowl of porridge with some stewed fruit and seeds. Processed foods often contain high levels of additives and ingredients which suppress good gut bacteria or increase levels of the bad ones (see below).



Increase your intake of the right fats

Instead of avoiding all fats, choose the right ones! Omega 3 oil is essential for brain function so choose foods which contain high levels, such as oily fish (e.g. mackerel, salmon, sardines), nuts, olive oil, seeds, avocados and eggs.



Eat enough protein

Protein contains amino acids which make up the chemicals your brain needs to regulate your thoughts and feelings. It also helps to control your blood sugar levels (important for if you are diabetic too). You can find protein in meat, fish, eggs, cheese, beans, lentils, peas, soya products, nuts and cheese.

Maintain a healthy gut

Your state of mind is closely connected your gut, not just because of your physical comfort but also because it is thought that having a healthy population of 'gut bugs' can have a significant influence on your mood via the 'gut-brain axis'—the scientific term for the connection between your stomach and your brain. Try increasing your intake of fibre (in fruit, veg and wholegrains) and live yoghurts (containing probiotics) as well as eating a wide range of fruit and vegetables. Avoid highly processed foods (see above).



Avoid too much caffeine and alcohol

Caffeine and alcohol can both negatively sleep patterns and mood, so it's best to limit your consumption of both to help with this.

Remember, making changes to your diet can be hard, so don't give up! Introduce small changes slowly and then stick with them. Even if you don't feel better straight away, these changes really should help over time.