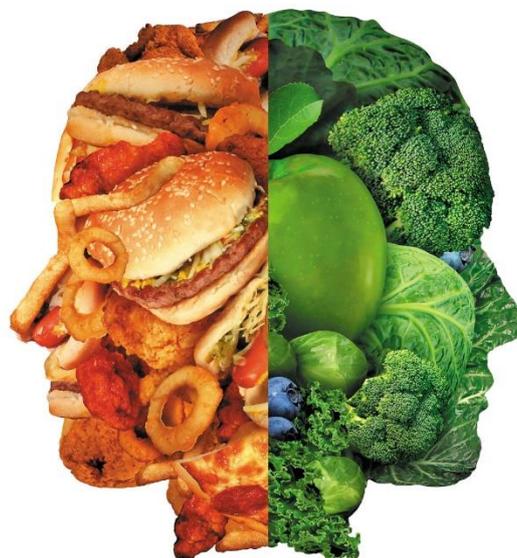


Improve Your Mood with Better Food

With more than 300 million people living with depression worldwide, it is a leading cause of disability. People living with depression can find it difficult to maintain work and relationships, may struggle to enjoy hobbies and activities, and are at greater risk of suicide than people without depression. Depression is often successfully treated with medication and/or psychological therapy. While these methods are tried and true, research is beginning to show that there is a connection between gut and mind that may play an important role in mood.



We have long known that exercise and a healthy diet are vital for a healthy body. We are now discovering that these are also vital for a healthy mind. Eating well can play an important role in treating and preventing depression. More importantly, research has shown unhealthy diets can increase the risk of depression. While it's okay to indulge from time to time, cutting junk food out of your regular diet is an important first step. Try to avoid foods that are high in energy but low in nutrition:

- Processed foods (most takeaway food and deli meats)
- Fried food
- Butter
- Salt
- Refined grains (white bread, pastries, pasta, cake)
- Sugary drinks and snacks

According to the CSIRO, Australians consume on average, 19 serves of junk food each week and not nearly enough serves of fibre-rich fresh food and wholegrains. As a result, we are overfed but undernourished, leaving us mentally worse-off. Improving your mental wellbeing may be as simple as a diet change. Try to include more of the following in your daily diet:

- Fruit (2 serves per day)
- Vegetables (5 serves)
- Wholegrains
- Nuts
- Legumes
- Oily fish
- Dairy products
- Small amounts of meat



Eating well improves mental health in several ways.

- Complex carbohydrates found in fruits, vegetables, and wholegrains provide the necessary fuel to the cells in our brains. Complex carbs slowly release their fuel, whereas simple carbs (like those found in sugary and processed foods) are released quickly, giving us energy highs and lows throughout the day. These fluctuations in energy affect how we feel mentally. With a steady release of energy, we are more likely to maintain a consistent, positive outlook.
- Antioxidants found in brightly coloured fruit and vegetables help to get rid of damaged or nasty cells in the body. They also decrease inflammation in the brain, allowing the production of more 'feel good' chemicals such as serotonin, resulting in improved mood.
- Omega 3 (found in fish) and Vitamin B (found in some vegetables) also increase the production of 'feel good' chemicals, decreasing the risk of depression and improving mood.
- Probiotics and prebiotics found in yoghurt, cheese, and fermented products boost the living bacteria in our gut.

What happens when you switch to a healthy diet?

A recent randomized control trial conducted in Australia (<https://bmcmmedicine.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12916-017-0791-y>) found that depression symptoms significantly improved following a 12-weeks of healthy eating. The diet focused on reducing food products such as sweets, refined cereals, processed foods, sugary drinks, and increasing the quantity of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and lean meats. The results showed that an improved diet has a direct link to mental health, and that improving your diet may not only improve existing depressive symptoms but reduce the risk of developing them.



If you would like support with your diet or mental health, please call us Toll Free on 1300 369 072 or email us at mail@working-life.net