

COVID-19 HEALING FACT SHEETS:

Eating Well for your Mental Health

Eating well gives you more energy, helps you sleep better, improves your concentration and mental health.

Follow these healthy eating habits to help improve your mental health.



FOOD AND YOUR MOOD

When you think of improving your mental health, you may not think about changing the food you eat, but there is a strong link between what we eat and how we feel!

We know an unhealthy diet can be associated with increased symptoms of depression and anxiety, but now we are seeing a healthy diet (with a variety of fruit, veggies, nuts and whole grains) can actually improve mental health.

This is a pretty new and exciting area of research. In fact, two recent studies investigated whether healthy food could reduce

depression symptoms. And the results were clear. People who ate a healthier diet improved their depression symptoms more than people who focused on only social support.

Here's how eating well can improve your health:

- helps you get a better night sleep
- gives you more energy
- improves your concentration
- makes you less likely to crave foods with high sugar, salt or fat.



HEALTHY HABITS

When you're feeling low and struggling with life it's important to put healthy habits in place – to give yourself a better chance of coping with life's challenges.

Eating well is one of these healthy habits, but it's not the only one. Things like exercise, sleeping well, and spending time with people you love also play an important role in good mental health.

HOW CAN I EAT FOR A HEALTHIER MENTAL HEALTH?

- Often we turn to unhealthy snacks when we are stressed. So it's good to develop coping strategies that are not related to food, things like exercise or mindfulness.
- Make sure your diet includes colorful fruits and vegetables, foods high in fibre (wholegrain cereals and bread, beans, chickpeas, lentils and nuts), fermented foods like unsweetened yogurt, olive oil, and fish (tinned is fine).
- Make small changes that are easy to stick to. Start by swapping an unhealthy afternoon snack for a healthy one, like a piece of fruit.
- You don't have to be perfect, and don't be too hard on yourself. A burger or a chocolate bar are fine every now and then (once on the weekend) but it's important to make sure your diet includes a variety of nutritious foods, most of the time!
- Try to avoid too much red meat – keep it to 3-4 times per week.