Approaches to Holistic Wellness

Diet and Mental Health by David Snebold

We have learned a lot recently about the positive effects of diet on a person’s mental health. Research studies have shown the importance that diet can play into one’s state of mind and functioning.

Those who consume a diet that is comprised of foods like vegetables, nuts, whole grains, fruits, legumes, fish, and unsaturated fats (such as olive oil) are up to 35% less likely to start having depression than those who eat less of those kinds of foods (Mental Health Foundation).

Food that is highly processed, sugary and fried foods, have very little nutritional value and should be refrained from. Research demonstrates that a diet that regularly involves these types of foods can help develop depression by as much as 60%. (Mental Health America)

During a 2017 study, researcher Knüppel monitored the sugar intake of over 23,000 participants. The researchers discovered that those who ate a lot of sugar – 67 or more grams a day (slightly less than two cans of coke) – were 23 percent more likely to have depressive-like symptoms. (HealthLine)

“An earlier study from 2011 Trusted Source found that when medical students increased their omega-3 fatty acid intake, their anxiety reduced by 20 percent (though with no changes to depression), while in 2016, Spanish researchers found people who followed the Mediterranean lifestyle closest were 50 percent less likely to develop depression than those who didn’t follow the diet as well.” (HealthLine)

“Certain nutrients and dietary patterns are linked to changes in a brain protein that helps increase connections between brain cells. A diet rich in nutrients like omega-3s and zinc boosts levels of this substance.” (WebMD)

Of course, results vary by the person, and dietary changes are not a substitute for medication, but it does seem clear that paying attention to what you eat can offer benefits in your mental health.

Bibliography

