OEOD News

Nutrition and Mental Health

We often associate nutrition with weight maintenance, but eating well is just as important in nourishing your brain. Your brain works hard even while you're asleep. This means it requires a constant supply of nutrition and the foods you eat make all the difference.

Diets high in processed, refined foods and sugars are harmful to your brain. If substances from these low-quality foods get to your brain, it has little ability to get rid of them. They cause oxidative stress, inflammation and impaired mental function — irritability, anxiety, depression, and Alzheimer.

Eating high-quality foods containing lots of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants nourishes your brain and protects it from oxidative stress Consider increasing these nutrients to improve brain health:

- Folate—meat, beans, and greens
- Omega-3 fatty acids — fish, flaxseed, walnuts, and eggs
- Vitamin C—berries, bell peppers, and citrus fruits
- Vitamin E—nuts and vegetable oils

Eat a clean diet for a few weeks — cutting out all processed foods, grains, dairy, and sugar. See how you feel. Then slowly introduce foods back into your diet, one by one, and see how you feel. You won't believe how much better you will feel emotionally. Give it a try!

National Nutrition Month

Productivity and Nutrition

Nutrition and Mental Health

Productivity and Nutrition

Chances are you've heard the saying, "you are what you eat." Nutrients from the foods you eat provide the foundation of the structure, function, and integrity of every cell in your body—from your skin, hair, muscles, bones, digestive tract, and immune system. When you eat healthfully, your body processes the nutrients and maximizes them for optimal energy. Poor nutrition doesn't give you the energy your body needs. As a result, your performance, productivity, and overall well-being will suffer.

If you've ever felt uncomfortably full or lethargic after eating a big lunch, then you already know that dietary choices can affect your productivity. It can also affect your mood causing irritability or depression, increase levels of stress, reduce you ability to think clearly, impact your creativity, lead to poor planning skills, and affect your ability to perform effectively.

Improving nutrition can help you beat this cycle. Here are some tips to ensure your productivity stays high all day long. It's important to balance food and beverages with your energy needs, rather than focusing on any one specific meal or food group.

1. Eat a healthy breakfast – start your day with nutritious foods to ensure better concentration and a steady energy level throughout the morning. Choose from these food groups:

- Low-fat protein - hardboiled eggs, peanut butter, lean meat, tofu, or nuts.
- Low-fat dairy - skim milk, cottage cheese, Greek yogurt, and cheese
- Fruits and vegetables – fresh produce is best but frozen is beneficial as well. Make fresh juice, drink 100% bottled juice, or create a variety of smoothies.
- Whole grains - in certain hot or cold cereals, crackers, rolls, or bagels. Try low-fat bran muffins or Melba toast.

2. Don't skip meals – this will hurt you later in the day by lowering your energy and productivity. Without a regular supply of nutritious foods, your body won't get the vitamins, minerals, and protein needed. It won't help your waistline either as your body compensates for missed meals by decreasing muscles and increasing fat.

3. Pack your lunch and plan ahead - Sandwiches on whole grain breads, pitas, or wraps are a good choice when paired with hummus, tuna, sliced eggs, and lean turkey or chicken. Salads pack well too if the dressing is kept separate or away from the leafy greens. Bring small containers of chopped veggies, almonds, granola bars, and fruit for additional snacks to keep your brain and body energized. Remember to drink plenty of water throughout the day to stay hydrated.

4. Make nutrition a workplace priority - talk to your coworkers or supervisors about ways you can create a more nutritionally savvy workplace. Having nutritious foods at work in break rooms or vending machines can improve morale, well-being, and productivity.

If you don't already eat healthfully, try making a few changes at a time. It's unreasonable to expect a full-fledged change in eating habits overnight. Gradual nutrition changes are the key to long-term success. However, you will likely notice even the smallest changes immediately when it comes to increasing your productivity levels. Improving overall well-being requires a lifelong commitment to healthy lifestyle behaviors, emphasizing lasting and enjoyable eating practices.

OEOD
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