

## MENTAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY

Diet and nutrition can play an important role in both prevention and the management of mental illnesses. Good nutrition and hydration can help aid recovery and prevent relapse.

Recent evidence suggests that good nutrition is essential for our mental health and that a number of mental health conditions may be influenced by dietary factors.

One of the most obvious, yet under-recognised factors in the development of major trends in mental health is the role of nutrition.

The body of evidence linking diet and mental health is growing at a rapid pace. As well as its impact on short and long-term mental health.

The evidence indicates that food plays an important contributing role in the development, management and prevention of specific mental health problems such as depression, schizophrenia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and Alzheimer's disease.

Those who report some level of mental health problem also eat fewer healthy foods (fresh fruit and vegetables, organic foods and wholesome homemade meals) and more unhealthy foods (chips and crisps, chocolate, ready meals and takeaways).



A balanced mood and feelings of wellbeing can be protected by ensuring that our diet provides adequate amounts of complex carbohydrates, essential fats, amino acids, vitamins and minerals and water.

While a healthy diet can help recovery, it should sit alongside other treatments recommended by your doctor

Nearly two thirds of those who do not report daily mental health problems eat fresh fruit daily, compared with less than half of those who do report daily mental health problems. This pattern is similar for fresh vegetables and salad.



### What should I eat?

Eat fewer high sugar foods and more wholegrain cereals, nuts, beans, lentils, fruit and vegetables.

Sugary foods are absorbed quickly into the bloodstream. This may cause an initial 'high' or surge of energy that soon wears off as the body increases its insulin production, leaving you feeling tired and low in/on energy.

Wholegrain cereals, pulses, fruit and vegetables are more filling and, because the sugar in these foods is absorbed more slowly, don't cause mood swings. These foods are more nutritious as they contain thiamin (B1), a vitamin that has been associated with control of mood, and also folate and zinc (supplements of these nutrients have been shown to improve the mood of people with depression in a small number of studies).