

VTIC Hub Resources March 2023

WHAT'S NEW 'March' - Theme: Food and Mental Health: The role of nutrition in fuelling wellbeing and success at work.

Title: Food and Mental Health: The role of nutrition in fuelling wellbeing and success at work

Introduction:

We know that good eating habits have a positive impact on our physical and mental wellbeing, so why don't more of us consider the important role nutrition plays when it comes to how we think, act, behave and perform at work?

For the month of March, we are sharing information and resources on the relationship between the foods we eat and our moods and mental health, and how good nutrition can help fuel success at work.

Through your diet, you ultimately have the choice to either enhance or hinder your levels of alertness, concentration, memory, creativity, and the ability to think effectively. The impact of a poor diet on your work life cannot be underestimated. The nutritional choices you make will affect your emotional state, your cognitive ability, and ultimately your performance. Therefore, instead of allowing one's diet to fall to the wayside during stressful times, these are the times when fuelling the mind and body with good nutrition is critical. A good diet will enable resilience and support stress management.

Your brain: Food and mood

Your brain requires a constant supply of fuel to function. That "fuel" comes from the foods you eat. And what's in the food makes all the difference. What you eat directly affects the structure and function of your brain and, ultimately, your mood. When it comes to addressing mental health, it's important to examine "your brain on food." It turns out that the adage "you are what you eat" extends to your mental and emotional experience — not just your physical body.

Gut-Brain Connection

There's an important relationship between gut health and mental health often referred to as the gut-brain connection. Harvard Health reports "A troubled intestine can send signals to the brain, just as a troubled brain can send signals to the gut. Therefore, a person's stomach or intestinal distress can be the cause or the product of anxiety, stress, or depression. That's because the brain and the gastrointestinal (GI) system are intimately connected."

Top Foods & Beverages for Fighting Stress, Anxiety and Stabilising Mood

Beyond Blue statistics report anxiety is the most common mental health condition in Australia. 1 in 4 people will experience anxiety at some stage in their life. Three million Australians are living with anxiety at any point in time. An Australian Government Treasury report into Small Business and Mental Health Dec 2022 showed anxiety as being the most prevalent mental health disorder reported by small business owners.

Studies into how diet and nutrition affect mental wellbeing, and in particular anxiety, show certain nutrients are helpful in managing and even preventing anxiety and help stabilise mood. When your mood is low you may crave calorie-rich, high sugar, refined carbohydrate foods like ice cream or cookies to try to give you an energy boost and lift your spirits. While this might give you a sugar rush, it's unlikely to help you in the long term — and may have adverse effects as well. Instead, you should aim for wholesome, nutritious foods that have been shown to not only boost your mood but also benefit your overall health.

Here are a few of the top foods to add to your diet if you want to cultivate an anti-anxiety, good mood-food diet and lifestyle.

1. Nuts & Seeds
2. Berries
3. Beans and lentils
4. Dark chocolate
5. Leafy greens
6. Avocado
7. Fermented foods
8. Fatty fish
9. Bananas
10. Tea: green, chamomile, peppermint, lavender, and passionflower tea

Wellbeing coaching support can help you to:

- Learn how to reduce stress in the moment
- Manage troublesome thoughts and feelings
- Motivate you to take the steps that can relieve stress and burnout
- Improve your relationships at work and home
- Rediscover joy and meaning that make work and life worthwhile
- Increase your overall health and happiness

Video resources:

1. TED-Ed How the food you eat affects your brain – Learn about how the food and drinks you consume effect the brain and in turn impact our energy levels, concentration, mood and more. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyQY8a-ng6g> (4:52 min)
2. 8 tips on how to manage your mood with food – Tips to help you explore the relationship between what you eat and how you feel. Improving your diet can help give you more energy, calmer moods, clearer thinking, and more positive feelings. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSHO9VdVRfg> (3:23 min)
3. An intro to the gut-brain connection – Learn about the way the gut and brain interact and how the gut-brain axis influences our mental wellbeing. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a8i7suRwjyA> (1:48 min)
4. Harvard nutritional psychiatrist (Dr. Uma Naidoo) shares the key foods for incredible mental health– learn more about the food-mood connection, anxiety & your diet, best foods for your brain, hidden trigger foods etc. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtHlw7QJT7Y> (42:11 min)
5. How to eat well on a budget by Dr Rupy Aujla and Professor Tim Spector – The cost of living has soared, and food costs have gone up enormously. Listen to this video to understand how to eat healthier while spending less. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kye5tF0I5gl> (47:56 min)

Web link resources:

1. Food for thought: How smart nutrition can fuel success for business owners - A good diet will enable resilience and the effective management of stress. <https://www.smartcompany.com.au/people-human-resources/food-thought-smart-nutrition-can-fuel-success-business-owners/>
2. What you eat affects your productivity - If you're serious about achieving top workplace performance, making intelligent decisions about food is essential. <https://hbr.org/2014/10/what-you-eat-affects-your-productivity>
3. Anxiety self-help strategies using diet and lifestyle – Learn more about what anxiety is, what causes it, and the simple dietary and lifestyle changes demonstrated to help. <https://foodrevolution.org/blog/anxiety-self->

[help-diet-lifestyle/?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=bbc-evergreen&utm_content=newbies-welcome-2-food-lifestyle-choices-for-anxiety](https://www.vtic.com.au/help-diet-lifestyle/?utm_source=sfmc&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=bbc-evergreen&utm_content=newbies-welcome-2-food-lifestyle-choices-for-anxiety)

4. How your belly could heal your brain – There is evidence that our gut bacteria can have a profound influence over our mental wellbeing. The bacteria inside us could be a crucial link between the food we eat and how we feel. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20190218-how-the-bacteria-inside-you-could-affect-your-mental-health>
5. Food and mood - Poor nutrition may be a causal factor in the experience of low mood, and improving diet may help to protect not only physical health but also mental health. <https://www.bmj.com/content/369/bmj.m2382>

Our workplace wellbeing consultant Dannii provides free and confidential one-on-one wellbeing coaching to business owners and staff. Wellbeing consultations to businesses and leadership teams, as well as training workshops are on offer to small businesses with up to 20 full-time staff or the equivalent. Dannii can be contacted on consultation@vtic.com.au or (03) 7035 5732.

For the current month Wellbeing topic go to:

<https://hub.vtic.com.au/business-support/mental-health-and-wellbeing/whats-new-this-month>

<https://hub.vtic.com.au/business-support/mental-health-and-wellbeing/>

