



Vida Psychology's introduction to

# *nutrition*

AND ITS BENEFITS FOR MENTAL HEALTH.

## **THERE IS MOUNTING SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THERE IS A CONNECTION BETWEEN MOOD AND FOOD. BUT WHAT MAKES A HEALTHY DIET?**

Research in the field of nutrition and public health has found that during the last two decades, the intake of healthy foods has increased in some countries including Australia, but there has been a dramatic increase in the intake of unhealthy foods (Imamura et al., 2015) leading to the worsening of overall dietary patterns.

In parallel, there is mounting scientific evidence on the connection between mood and food. Healthier diets have been consistently and strongly associated with reduced risk of depression. In contrast, recent research has shown a link between dietary patterns and depression.

But what makes a healthy diet? A healthy diet is mainly composed of plant foods and good sources of protein. Vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, raw nuts, fish, lean red meats, healthy fats such as olive oil, and reduced fat dairy. Processed foods should be avoided or eaten in moderation (see Australian Dietary Guidelines).

Wholefoods, vegetables and fruit are more filling and their digestion happens more slowly than processed foods (e.g. confectionary, refined carbohydrates) leading to less mood swings and a more stable cycle hunger-satiety (the sense of fullness). Sugary foods and refined carbohydrates are absorbed earlier in the digestive track, which causes an initial surge of energy that wears off quickly, leaving a sense of tiredness and hunger.



## DID YOU KNOW?



Evidence indicates that food plays an important role in the prevention, development and management of depression, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorders, and Alzheimer's disease.

Multiple studies in the field of Nutritional Psychiatry have compared healthy diets, such as the Mediterranean diet and the traditional Japanese diet against a typical "Western" diet and have shown that the risk of depression is 25% to 35% lower amongst individuals who eat a "traditional" healthy diet. Other studies have found a strong association between a diet high in refined sugars and impaired brain function.

Undoubtedly, what you eat, how you feel, and how you ultimately behave are related, and this responds to complex processes between body and mind.

This introduction to nutrition was written by Vida Psychologist Katerina Chin-a-Loy.



Having a healthy diet that provides plenty of nutrients can assist with mental health issues and general health, so why not making the changes to get there?

references available at [www.vidapsychology.com.au](http://www.vidapsychology.com.au)

Changing your diet is just one of the many things you can do to improve your mental health. If you'd like to explore how you can adjust your routine to improve your well being, please contact Vida Psychology on 03 9328 3636 to make an appointment with one of our psychologists.



- Eat a balanced, varied, whole food diet
- Think homemade over store-made
- Reduce the consumption of processed foods (all foods that usually come in a package)
- Increase your intake of vegetables, fruit, wholefoods, nuts, fish, olive oil
- Drink enough water (i.e. 2 liters a day)
- Take your time to eat. Mindful eating allows you to enjoy your food while provides great benefits to your digestion)
- Go easy on alcohol (moderation is the key)
- Change in small steps, practice positive self-talk and gratitude, and feel proud of yourself when achieving your goals, no matter how small!