



connect

wellbeing, ability, recovery

How Exercise And Diet Can Affect Mental Health

How exercise can promote good mental health:

Good mental health means feeling positive about yourself, coping with everyday pressures and forming and maintaining stable, rewarding relationships.

Mental health should be a priority for everyone; no one is immune to poor mental health. Mental health problems are health conditions that are characterised by alterations in thinking, mood or behavior.

Being physically active is a key element of living a longer, healthier, and happier life.

- It distracts us from our negative thinking
- Endorphin hormones are released within the body that are responsible for improving our mood.
- Boosts our self esteem as we become fitter and stronger through regular exercise
- Reduces tension within the muscles
- Reduces anxiety

Increasing our activity and exercise levels can make a big impact on our mood by:

- Making us feel better about ourselves
- Making us feel less tired
- Motivating us to do more
- Improving our ability to think more clearly
- Enjoyment
- Stimulating the body to produce natural anti – depressants
- Making us generally more healthy
- Stimulating our appetite
- Protecting against depression
- Reduces stress



Exercise also has a range of general benefits including:

- Weight loss
- Suppressing our appetite
- Lowering cholesterol levels
- Lowering blood pressure
- Improving the blood circulation within the body
- Can help prevent diabetes and coronary heart disease.

Why bother to exercise?

Feeling good physically can help us to feel better mentally. Exercise helps you feel good in mind and body.

- It helps you feel more energetic.
- It helps you relax.
- It helps you get slim and stay slim.
- It helps keep you supple and more mobile as you get older.
- It helps strengthen your muscles, joints and even your bones
- It helps almost everything in your body
- It gets easier the more you do
- You are more likely to sleep better

You don't have to join a gym or take up a new sport to get fit!!!

You can make some simple changes such as:

- Get off the bus a stop earlier and walk the rest
- Take the stairs instead of the lift
- Go for a walk
- Aim for 30 minutes of exercise each day, you can break it up into three 10 minute sessions
- Do activities that you enjoy!!!



How your diet could affect your mental health

Eat well to keep well.

Food and nutrition can effect emotional and mental health. Eating a healthy diet can help to boost our overall health, and provide us with the appropriate nutrients and energy we need to cope with our anxiety.

How does food affect your mood?

Fluctuations in blood sugar levels are linked with changes in mood and energy, and are affected by what we eat.

Low levels of vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids can affect mental health.

It's generally accepted that how we feel can influence what we choose to eat or drink (mood to food).

Caffeine, found in tea, coffee, cola drinks and chocolate, is probably the most widely used behaviour modifying drug in the world. We often choose to drink it if we are feeling tired and irritable, because it can give us a boost and help us concentrate. We also have tea breaks and meet friends for coffee which are very important but too much caffeine can cause symptoms such as anxiety, nervousness and depression.

It is important to limit or avoid alcohol, caffeine, fizzy drinks and energy drinks as these trigger symptoms like rapid heartbeat, restlessness, nervousness, Insomnia, and mood swings.



Which foods do I need to eat in order to feel well?

- The most important substance for a healthy mind and body is water. Six to Eight glasses of water is the daily recommendation. Drinking water can help how we feel mentally as well as physically
- Having a minimum of five portions of fruit and vegetables daily provides the nutrients needed to nourish mind and body
- Eat breakfast
- Do not skip meals, try to have regular meal times
- Choose foods that release energy slowly, such as oats and unrefined wholegrain.
- Eat some protein, such as meat, fish, beans, eggs, cheese, nuts or seeds, daily.
- Essential fatty acids found in mackerel, sardines and linseeds are vital for the formation and healthy functioning of the brain.
- Try to choose options that are lower in fat, salt and sugar when you can.

By eating a good healthy balanced diet it will help you to maintain both good physical and mental health.

Try to include in your diet:

- Plenty of fruit and vegetables
- Plenty of bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods – choose wholegrain when you can
- Some milk and dairy foods
- Some meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non – dairy sources of protein
- Just a small amount of foods and drinks high in fat and sugar.
- Remember to drink plenty of water.





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