



Improve Your Mood with Good Nutrition

By Katie Pipinich, RD, CDE and Laura Del Guerra, RD, CDE, Take Control Health Coaches

Can nutrition affect your mental health?

According to a growing body of science, the answer appears to be yes. Several

studies suggest that what we eat and

drink directly affects the structure and function of our brains. The brain requires a constant source of energy and gets this through the foods we eat. The more nutrient-rich foods we consume, the better our mental health.



takecontrol

Customized Plans. Individual Results. Real Savings.

The link between nutrition and mood

Serotonin, a chemical that helps regulate mood, sleep, and appetite, is produced primarily in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. Several recent studies have uncovered a link between serotonin and the “good” bacteria in your gut. This bacteria functions in many ways, including limiting inflammation in the body, improving nutrient absorption, and activating pathways between the gut and brain.

Studies have shown that a nutrient-rich diet produces changes in brain proteins that improve connections between brain cells. On the other hand, diets high in saturated fat and refined sugars have been shown to have a strong negative impact on the brain.

The Mediterranean and DASH diets were found to significantly improve anxiety and depression. These diets eliminate sugar intake, and consist of whole foods like vegetables, fruits, seafood, whole grains, lean meats, nuts, and legumes.

See more tips on page 3

SPRING 2021

In this issue...

- 1 Improve Your Mood with Good Nutrition
- 2 2021 Wellness Overview
- 2 Vitamin D Testing
- 3 How to Fuel Your Brain for the Best Overall Mental Health
- 4 Benefits Webinars
 - Open Enrollment
 - Retirees



2021 Wellness Program

This Wellness Program helps you get and stay healthy.
That saves you and your self-funded benefit pool money!

Complete activities at www.mmiaEB.net/wellness

\$50

Health Screening

Get a Health Screening through *It Starts With Me* (ISWM) or at a *Montana Health Center* between July 1 and September 30.

\$50

Health Screening Review

Complete your Health Screening Review call before November 5 with *Take Control*. Schedule online once you've had your Health Screening.

\$50

Education

Watch the video and complete the quiz between July 1 and September 30. You will need to enter your information into the secure quiz system as it appears on your benefit ID card.

\$50

80% Employee Participation

Get 80% of eligible employees in your city to do a Health Screening and everyone screened earns this incentive. Qualifying cities/towns will be posted in October.

NEW!

Vitamin D Testing

New this year, the MMIA Wellness Program has added vitamin D testing to the Health Screening panel. Vitamin D is connected to everything from bone health to mental health and many chronic conditions, including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and some types of cancer. Additionally, a healthy vitamin D level has been shown to decrease the chances of Covid-19 infection and increase the chances of a good recovery if a person happens to become infected. Many people in northern climates have low vitamin D levels, so this is particularly pertinent to our Montana population. Low vitamin D levels are also very easy to address and improve. We are excited to offer this valuable information to our participants this year!



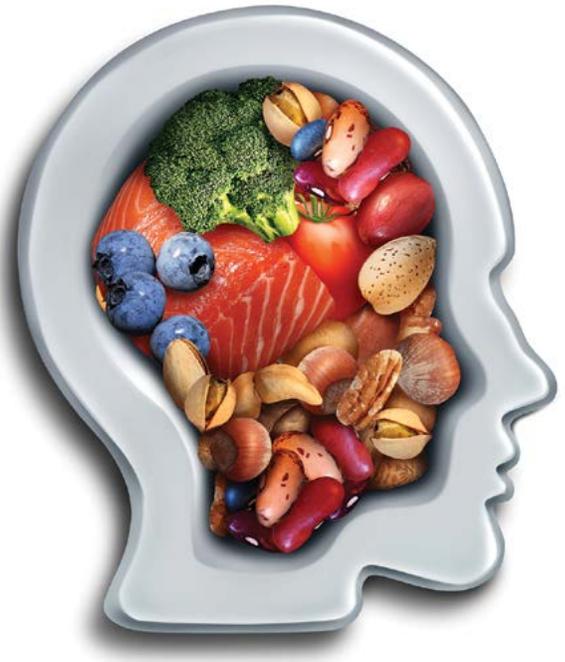
The Montana Municipal Interlocal Authority reserves the right to alter the Wellness Program at any time.

This program is developed in compliance with the EEOC wellness rules and does not violate anti-discrimination laws as laid down by the Americans with Disabilities Act and Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act. Participation in this program is voluntary. MMIA maintains the privacy and security of your personally identifiable health information. For more information, view our EEOC Notice at www.mmiaEB.net/wellness.

How to Fuel Your Brain for the Best Overall Mental Health

By Katie Pipinich, RD, CDE and Laura Del Guerra, RD, CDE, Take Control Health Coaches

1. **Eat consistently** throughout the day. Our brains need glucose (carbohydrates) to function. It is important that we fuel our body and brain at regular intervals throughout the day to avoid low blood sugar.
2. Try to **include complex carbohydrates with all meals**. Examples include whole wheat bread, quinoa, couscous, and rice. Carbohydrates are the primary fuel source for the brain, and complex carbohydrates are more nutrient-dense than simple carbohydrates.
3. **Stay hydrated!** The brain is approximately 80% water. When we become dehydrated, our brains feel strained. Good hydration not only improves brain function, but also gives you increased energy, and helps joint and muscle function.
4. **Add omega-3 fatty acids** into your weekly routine. Salmon, chia seeds, walnuts, and tuna are good sources of this essential fatty acid. If you do not like these foods, talk to your doctor about adding a supplement into your routine. Omega 3s may improve mood and help improve memory and thinking.
5. **Choose lean meats, nuts and legumes**. Many of these foods are rich in iron and zinc. Low levels of these nutrients are linked to depression.
6. **Fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables**. Try to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables to ensure you are consuming a variety of nutrients. Fruits and vegetables are great sources of vitamins and minerals like C and B12, which are also linked to brain health.
7. **Choose whole foods** as often as possible. Limit processed foods since they have been shown to damage the good bacteria in the gut and decrease serotonin production.
8. **Eat dark chocolate (in moderation)**. Dark chocolate contains flavonoids and antioxidants, which are both important for brain function. Look for chocolate that contains at least 70% cocoa content for an occasional treat!



Still skeptical? Try these recommendations for a few weeks. Cut out processed foods and sugar. Notice how you feel. Is your mood better? Do you have more energy? Chances are the answer will be yes.

Did you know?

MMIA offers no- and low-cost benefits





PO Box 6669
Helena, MT 59604-6669
800.635.3089
www.mmiaEB.net

Open Enrollment Webinar

Tuesday, May 18, 2021
11:00 a.m.

Webinar Address:

<http://bit.ly/2021mmiaOE>

Dial In: 1 (253) 215-8782

Meeting ID: 997 5392 8403

Access Code: 438833

What does
my health plan
really cover?

How can
I get free
prescriptions?

How can I
improve my
health & save
money?

Healthcare Coverage in Retirement

Wednesday, May 12, 2021
10:00 a.m.

Webinar Address:

<http://bit.ly/EB2021RETIREE>

Dial In: 1 (253) 215-8782

Meeting ID: 946 9854 9981

Access Code: 372680

Learn how
to save \$\$\$ on
health coverage in
retirement!

