



## HEALTHY MIND

### Be Mindful of Your Diet

#### Link Between Diet and Mental Health

We're familiar with the saying: "We are what we eat." It means that we need to eat good food to be physically healthy. However, that saying serves greater meaning as recent research has linked how a healthy diet can contribute to good mental health.

A 2014 review of 21 studies from the University of Newcastle in Australia concluded that a diet made up of high consumptions of fruits, vegetables, fish and whole grains wards off depression. The *British Journal of Psychiatry* backs up this conclusion with its 2013 study on how 90,000 Japanese men and women, whose diet consisted of more vegetables, fruits, potatoes, soy, seaweed and fish correlated with a lower risk of suicide.

So, how does diet have a direct impact on mental health?

According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, people who experience clinical depression have a higher measure of brain inflammation. A diet that includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and oily fish is loaded with anti-inflammatory benefits which may help the brain chemicals regulate emotions and thought. Oily fish, in

particular, is rich in omega-3 fatty acids and helps with brain cell communication.

Other research, such as the 2009 study done by the University of British Columbia found that sufferers of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia have elevated levels of oxidative stress. Plus, depressive symptoms are associated with higher levels of free radical damage. To combat these potential outcomes and protect our brain, we should consume food that's loaded with antioxidants, such as blueberries, nuts and seeds.

It's not hard to understand the link between nutrition and mental health. When in doubt, go back to the food basics by eating lots of whole foods and avoiding saturated, processed alternatives. Your body and mind will thank you for it.

## HEALTHY LIVING

### Back Talk

#### Reducing Back Pain

Back pain is a common problem for many of us. In fact, about 80% of the population will experience back pain at some point in their lives, according to BackCareCanada.

Since the pain comes in many forms (lower, middle, upper back pain), the causes also vary. The common

causes may be attributed to nerve and muscular problems from a single, highly impactful event, or from everyday repetitive activities at work or home, such as prolonged sitting at a desk or lifting and carrying a child or pet. In any event, there are ways to improve your back health, which don't require a doctor's prescription.

Dr. Patrick Roth, author of *The End of Back Pain*, offers the following tips:

- Strengthen your core. Activities, such as yoga and Pilates, help strengthen your core muscles, which are essential to preventing and reducing back pain.
- Develop an exercise routine which includes the use of kettlebells. The weight from the kettlebells force you to engage your gluteal muscles which are often weakened by excessive sitting.
- Get up to stretch. Weak back and abdominal muscles can cause or worsen low back pain. That's why it's important to remember to give yourself a stretch break after each activity.
- Stand up and keep standing. Prolonged sitting has been shown to create a host of ailments. Sitting in one position (and possibly a wrong position) for a long period of time is detrimental on your back. Make it a habit to stand up whenever and wherever you can.
- Consult with an ergonomics expert. Simple changes such as the height of your computer monitor and keyboard tray (if you use one) can have an impact on your posture. A good posture means a healthier back.



Source: BackCareCanada

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**TRG**  
GROUP BENEFITS

## HEALTHY HEART

### Naturally Speaking

#### Understanding Naturopathic Medicine

When you see the designation “ND”, what do you think that means? It stands for “naturopathic doctor” – a profession that is growing in popularity as people seek healthcare alternatives to conventional medicine.

Naturopathic medicine focuses on the prevention of illness and the underlying causes of ailments instead of looking at the symptoms of the disease. As its name suggests, naturopathic medicine is about using natural remedies and supports the body's own healing ability to promote health and wellness over the use of conventional drug therapy and surgery. Individualized treatment plans are prescribed for each patient, which commonly include diet and lifestyle changes, homeopathy, traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture, botanical medicine, and hydrotherapy.

Unlike a visit with a general physician, which is roughly a five to ten minute conversation with the doctor about the surfaced symptoms, a naturopathic visit takes about 60 minutes. During this time, the naturopathic doctor gets a comprehensive understanding of the patient's history, current health status, contributing lifestyle factors and treatment progress, according to the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine.

Not all naturopathic doctors are allowed to prescribe drug therapy as it depends on their province of residence, their level of licensing and the type of drug. However, conditions ranging from cardiovascular diseases, such as cholesterol and blood pressure, to stress management and mental health concerns are treatable by naturopaths.

Whether or not naturopathy is the right way to go is up to the individual. However, preventative healthcare, as philosophized by naturopathic medicine could potentially help avoid the onset of diseases down the road.