

# Asset Health *Talk*



Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

## Food *for* Thought

### *The Best Nutrients for Supporting Mental Health*

A recent medical journal publication supports that diet is as important to mental health as it is to heart, digestive system and hormone health. Other researchers are zeroing in on the specific nutrients that can stabilize moods and help to prevent or relieve symptoms of mental illnesses like depression or bipolar disorder.

#### Folate

(e.g., spinach, lentils, chickpeas)

Folate helps to balance your mood by stimulating production of feel-good neurotransmitters, such as serotonin, dopamine and epinephrine.

A 2013 study documented the nutritional habits of two women with bipolar disorder and found that when both women followed a ketogenic diet (consuming high fat, moderate protein and low carbohydrates), they were able to stabilize their moods better than when they were being treated with medication alone. Each brain is wildly unique but

#### Omega-3 Fatty Acids

(e.g., fatty fish, walnuts)

Omega-3 fatty acids and the brain are like peanut butter and jelly; they just go together. Dietitians suggest including omega-3 fatty acids in your diet each week to boost feelings of happiness.

dietitians feel strongly that the following nutrients can benefit everyone in an effort to reach optimum brain health.

“The Growing Link Between Nutrition and Mental Health – and the Best Foods for It,” Korin Miller, yahoo.com, June 11, 2015.

“Nutritional Medicine as Mainstream in Psychiatry,” Jerome Sarris and several authors, The Lancet Psychiatry, thelancet.com, Jan. 25, 2015.

#### Complete Proteins

(e.g., eggs, poultry, rice and beans, peanut butter and bread)

Complete proteins maintain overall body functioning and support healthy moods. For vegetarians or vegans, eating the combo of rice and beans or peanut butter and whole-grain bread offers a robust supply of complete protein amino acids.

#### Vitamin D

(e.g., mushrooms, tuna, salmon, milk)

The “D” in vitamin D doesn’t stand for “depression,” but this nutrient and mental illness are certainly linked. You can avoid vitamin D deficiency, which can lead to depression, by adding some of the listed foods above to your diet. If you know you lack vitamin D, getting your daily vitamin D from food is nearly impossible. Talk to your physician about supplements as an option. Spending 10 to 15 minutes in the sun can also help raise your body’s production of vitamin D.

## NOW SHOWING

### *That Sugar Film*

A new documentary called *That Sugar Film*, which has surfaced in Australia, illustrates some of the woes of consuming excess sugar. As a young adult, the director and star of the movie, Damon Gameau, said he had the typical diet of a man in his young 20s, full of soda and other sugar-laden foods, but later cleaned up his act with clean eating. Without trying, he shed a few pounds while noticing many other unexpected positive effects. After several years of pretty much eliminating sugar from his diet, he decided to do an experiment for 60 days and document the effects of reintroducing sugar into his diet to understand its impact on his body. His goal was to eat 40 teaspoons of sugar

daily, the average amount an Australian adult consumes in his home country. He set certain ground rules. He was going to maintain the same level of exercise and continue to refrain from sweets including chocolate, ice cream, soft drinks and candy. There was a twist though. He limited his sugar consumption to foods considered “healthy,” such as low-fat yogurt, fruit juice, granola bars, cereals, condiments and the like. This idea came to him when he was at a grocery store and discovered that a single serving of many condiments contains more sugar per serving than chocolate sauce.

He assembled a team of professionals to document his journey—doctors, scientists and nutritionists. They were astounded by the results. Damon gained over 6 pounds

in less than two weeks and developed fatty liver disease within 18 short days. By the end of the experiment, he gained more than 18 pounds, developed prediabetes, added almost 4 inches of dangerous belly fat around his waist and noticed fluctuations in his mood.

While the results are compelling, you should take them with a grain of salt, or perhaps a grain of sugar in this case. This is an anecdotal account. However, it is a powerful message that portrays how excessive amounts of sugar can sneak into our diets and wreak havoc on our health. If you’re interested in checking out this documentary, you can rent or download it on iTunes. Better yet, make it a family movie night!

“I Ate 40 Teaspoons of Sugar a Day. This Is What Happened,” Damon Gameau, telegraph.co.uk, June 27, 2015.

If you would like to start cutting back on your sugar intake, here are some foods that often contain high amounts of hidden sugar that you should watch out for:



- \* Pasta sauces
- \* Yogurt
- \* Instant oatmeal
- \* Salad dressings
- \* Granola and granola bars



- \* Cereals
- \* Canned fruits
- \* Bottled tea
- \* Dried fruit
- \* Ketchup
- \* Coleslaw



"Surprising Sources of Hidden Sugar," WebMD, webmd.com, May 23, 2014.

## Should Adults Get Vaccinated, Too?

Did you know before vaccines, or immunizations, were introduced, people gained immunity only by actually getting a disease and then – here's the tricky part – surviving it? August is National Immunization Awareness Month, which means it's the perfect time to talk with your physician about staying up to date on vaccinations.

## How Do Vaccines Work?

Germs enter your body and your body combats them by creating substances with the help of your immune system. Should the same germ ever return, your immune system is well-equipped to fight it again. Vaccinations can help enhance your body's defenses by introducing potential threats to your immune system. Vaccines contain a safe, effective and small amount of viruses or bacteria that have been killed or weakened. For a healthy person, the vaccine prompts the immune system to react and therefore build immunity to prevent infection by that same virus or bacteria.

Since being introduced, vaccinations have prevented outbreaks of once common infectious diseases like measles, mumps and whooping cough and nearly eradicated other diseases like polio and smallpox. Between two and three million deaths are prevented annually from vaccination.

Vaccinations are vital because they protect us from serious diseases and prevent the spread of those diseases to others. When receiving these shots, they may be slightly painful, but the diseases they can prevent are a lot worse, and some are even life-threatening.

Most people think vaccinations are only for children, but adults need them, too. You don't have to make any major lifestyle change for vaccines. In fact, they can be one of the most cost-effective health investments you make. The goal of vaccination is to prevent disease, and it's far simpler and more cost-effective to prevent a disease than it is to treat it.

Some vaccines need to be given only once. However, other vaccines require updates or boosters to maintain successful immunization and continued protection against disease. If you were

vaccinated as a child, you may be due for booster shots as an adult.

Check out the CDC's immunization schedules at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules> to stay current on vaccinations at every age. And make sure this a healthy and happy year for you and your family!

"Immunization," World Health Organization, who.int, accessed July 14, 2015.

"Immunization," Medline Plus, nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus, accessed July 14, 2015.

"Immunization and Vaccines," WebMD, webmd.com, accessed July 14, 2015.

