



THE BURNT CHEF PROJECT

WHAT DOES A DIET RELATING TO GOOD WELLNESS AND HEALTH LOOK LIKE?

All too often when we are stressed, tired or busy we tend to gravitate towards sugary snacks and meals containing high fat levels and processed carbohydrates and whilst these are satisfying and ok to consume in moderation they cause blood sugar spikes and crashes and can cause irritability and lapses in concentration levels

There is evidence that suggests that there are many foods out there that can have a positive effect on mood and wellbeing and help streamline blood sugar levels for slow release energy throughout the day. Probiotics and fermented foods are known for their digestive benefits but there is also evidence that digestive health is directly linked to brain function, mood and some studies suggest that consuming probiotics can have a positive effect on depression symptoms.

THERE ARE LOADS OF RECIPES OUT THERE:

Examples include - Kefir, Yoghurt, Sauerkraut, kimchi, tempeh, miso, buttermilk and pickled vegetables. Omega 3 fatty acids can be found in oily fish such as sardines, mackerel and salmon. Many mainstream health organisations recommend a minimum of 250-500mg of omega 3 a day for adults. Tinned sardines are great for a post or pre workout snack, or on toast as a light brunch.

Vegan alternatives for oily fish are flax seeds, walnuts soy beans and chia seeds which both contain substantial levels of omega 3 and can be blended into smoothies or sprinkled onto salads or hot dishes.

Choosing whole grains over refined carbohydrate is proven to boost digestive health. By stabilising blood sugar levels high fibre foods and whole grains help regulate brain neurotransmitter secretions. and in turn could assist in improving concentration levels and general mood.

Whole grains are an extremely important source of b vitamins. For example thiamine (B1) turns glucose into energy and pantothenic acid (B5) is used to produce the neurotransmitter responsible for learning and memory. Vitamins B6 and B12 are involved in the production of dopamine and serotonin, chemicals in the brain that regulate mood and feelings.

Quinoa, barley, wholewheat pasta, brown rice and lentils are all good examples of whole grains. Try and mix some cooked quinoa with your salads or swap out your pasta or rice for wholewheat pasta and brown rice for the extra fibre.

Leafy greens such as spinach and kale are packed full of nutrients and also a great source of B vitamins such as folate. Try and incorporate some into every meal. I like to use frozen spinach in Bolognese and lasagne for that added extra portion of vegetables.

I'm a big advocate for breakfast and although some people believe that skipping breakfast is more beneficial for overall mood and wellbeing studies have shown that a regular consistent and nutritious breakfast can help regulate blood sugar and boost metabolism. Overnight oats, yoghurt, eggs and fresh fruit are all perfect for a good mood boosting start to the day.

REFUEL
— BY GYMSHARK —

WHAT ARE THE COMMON PITFALLS AND HOW CAN THEY BE HANDLED?

There are many common pitfalls that people may encounter when adjusting to dietary changes. Behaviour change is the most common one and as a rule people are generally creatures of habit. (especially chefs) We need to educate and encourage chefs to look after themselves as they would their customers. Almost see their diet as a quick and easy fix to help boost productivity levels, aid sleep and help them to feel more energetic. Financial challenges time constraints and background could also factor into peoples eating habits.

'There are a range of inequalities that can contribute to the development of mental health problems, and how these factors interact with each other to affect mental health can be complex. Factors such as poorer physical health, and living in poverty, or deprived communities, have been found to be associated with poorer mental health and wellbeing. Both these inequality factors have also been shown to have a complex relationship with poor nutrition.'

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Unhealthy fast food or restaurant left overs costs very little or nothing. They are really readily available and take little time and they give little to no real nutritional benefit. Business operators, head chefs and general managers should ensure that all staff have the time and resources to eat a balanced diet and factor this into their busy schedules. As said before this will not only boost productivity levels but also help reduce staff illnesses and time off. Small investments in people can have big benefits further down the line.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO IMPROVE MENTAL WELLBEING THROUGH DIET CHANGE AND EXERCISES? ANY STUDIES IN THIS FIELD?

Generally I would recommend for people to introduce new food and dietary changes slowly, over a 3-4 week period dietary changes need to be sustainable so completely cutting out carbs, sugar, alcohol generally doesn't work for most people.

Small incremental changes in diet such as reducing caffeine, drinking low or zero sugar drinks or limiting processed carbs such as breads and cakes are a great place to start. Some advice taken from the Harvard University nutrition blog below reinforces the evidence that diet can affect mental health.

NUTRITIONAL PSYCHIATRY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU?

'Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that helps regulate sleep and appetite, mediate moods, and inhibit pain. Since about 95% of your serotonin is produced in your gastrointestinal tract, and your gastrointestinal tract is lined with a hundred million nerve cells, or neurons, it makes sense that the inner workings of your digestive system don't just help you digest food, but also guide your emotions. What's more, the function of these neurons – and the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin - is highly influenced by the billions of "good" bacteria that make up your intestinal microbiome. These bacteria play an essential role in your health. They protect the lining of your intestines and ensure they provide a strong barrier against toxins and "bad" bacteria; they limit inflammation; they improve how well you absorb nutrients from your food; and they activate neural pathways that travel directly between the gut and the brain.'

Start paying attention to how eating different foods makes you feel - not just in the moment, but the next day. Try eating a "clean" diet for two to three weeks - that means cutting out all processed foods and sugar. See how you feel. Then slowly introduce foods back into your diet, one by one, and see how you feel. When some people "go clean," they cannot believe how much better they feel both physically and emotionally, and how much worse they then feel when they reintroduce the foods that are known to enhance inflammation.'

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