



Importance of Nutritional Choices

“You are what you eat.” This is something we often hear and is often true. Nutritional choices affect a lot of things in our bodies, such as sleep, strength, mood, weight, and memory. Sometimes, we tend to overlook our diet and lifestyle, but having smart nutritional choices can make us feel a lot better. Taking care of yourself also means taking care of what you eat.

Studies show that eating healthy food improves our mood. It was found that there is a positive association between depressive symptoms and poor nutritional choices, such as eating meals high in processed grain products and low in nutritious fruits and vegetables and lean meat. Consumption of high glycemic index foods such as cakes, cookies, fries, white rice, and white bread makes us vulnerable to fatigue, mood disturbances, and depressive symptoms as opposed to intake of low glycemic index foods such as beans, fruits, vegetables, milk, and yogurt.^{1,2} Besides mood, a diet consisting of low glycemic index foods can have other benefits such as improved cholesterol levels, reduced weight, and reduced risk of lifestyle-related diseases such as heart disease and certain types of cancer.³⁻⁸

Our diet and lifestyle also affect the quality of our sleep. Having too many calories and fat in the diet makes it harder to get enough quality sleep.⁹ Diets that could be lacking essential nutrients such as calcium, magnesium, and vitamins can cause shorter sleep durations.¹⁰ Conscious choices such as taking in caffeine and alcohol before bedtime also affect the quality of sleep.^{11,12} In turn, sleep disturbances affect the cycling of certain hormones such as leptin, which is responsible for telling the brain to stop consuming calories. It also affects ghrelin, which stimulates appetite and increases food consumption. This is why sleep-deprived people tend to overeat.^{13,14} When these two hormones are unbalanced, such as when one has poor quality sleep, it can lead to imbalances in diet and nutrition and therefore in our overall health and mood.

Good nutrition helps with memory and cognitive function. Lack of certain vitamins and minerals can affect memory retention because they are often needed for the biological processes that are involved in memory processing. A sufficient intake of fruits and vegetables and omega-3 fats from fish reduces the risk of dementia. Polyphenols from plant-based foods help with memory because they could limit inflammation in the brain.¹⁵

Good nutritional choices, partnered with a healthy lifestyle, exercise, and a good sleeping habit, can reduce the risk of some lifestyle-related diseases such as stroke, certain types of cancers, and heart diseases. Making proper health choices can help us feel better and be well-rounded people.

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This does not substitute the advice of your HCP.

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