

I.T.S. Wellness Letter

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August 2019

Your Brain on Food

Most of us are aware of the impact that diet and nutrition have on physical health, but have you considered the impact on mental health? An abundance of research shows unmistakably that what we eat affects our minds, in addition to our bodies. Studies have shown that many of those affected with mental health issues have insufficient intake of necessary nutrients such as vitamins and minerals, complex carbohydrates, essential fatty acids, amino acids, as well as water. Much of the brain's structures, and thus the ability to adequately send signals and communicate within itself and with the body, rely on the foods we eat and the nutrients therein. Clearly, without good nutrition, our brains (and thus our emotions, behaviors, and thoughts) are not working at their best, and thus leave us susceptible to a host of mental and emotional struggles.



Your Brain on Exercise

Exercise has always been recommended for good physical health. However, physical health is but one part of overall wellness. Our mental health is equally important, and exercise has shown to have a very positive impact on our mental and emotional well-being. Aerobic exercise, such as jogging, swimming, and cycling, has shown to reduce anxiety and stress by increasing blood flow to the brain, and acting on the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, which helps regulate arousal (and stress). Exercise also releases brain chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin, which serve to boost mood. Less vigorous exercise such as yoga has also proven highly beneficial to the brain. The deep breathing and meditation work also influences the aforementioned HPA axis, which controls arousal. Yoga activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps us calm down and feel at peace.

