Food for the Mind

Research demonstrates that what we eat has an impact on our mental health and how we feel. There are many reasons for this, such as how our brain chemicals are affected, our blood sugar levels, and abnormal reactions to additives in some foods. Improving your diet can help to improve your mood and help you to think more clearly.

What’s causing the problems?

Consuming unhealthy foods, such as fast food and sweets has been found to be associated with stress and depressive symptoms. Specifically, foods higher in trans fats, which are found in processed packaged foods can have negative effects on mood and heart health.

What should I be eating?

Eating regularly is vital for blood sugar levels, which can impact fatigue, irritability, and depressive symptoms. For this, slow-release energy foods are a great way to keep consistent blood sugar levels. Slow-release energy foods include oats, nuts, seeds, and wholemeal rice and breads.

Consuming healthy foods, such as fruits, fish, and vegetables has been shown to lead to lower levels of stress and depressive symptoms. Particularly foods that contain vitamin B6 improve serotonin levels, which improves mood, such as spinach and bananas. Additionally, if you’re already stressed or anxious this can make your gut speed up or slow down, your gut is essential for healthy digestion. To aid a healthy gut, fibre is vital. Foods such as, wholegrains, fruits, beans, pulses, veg, and yogurt can be beneficial for that.

Protein is made up of amino acids, which provide the chemicals that our brains need to regulate our thoughts and feelings. Healthy proteins for this include eggs, fish, cheese, legumes, seeds, and nuts. Finally, healthy fats are essential for your brain to function effectively, such as oily fish, eggs, nuts, seeds, and olive oil.

Find more information and support at:

**Mind**:

Helpline: 0300 123 3393

Website: mind.org.uk

**SHOUT:**

Text shout: 85258

Website: giveusashout.org

What else can I do?

Think about how and when you’re eating, research has shown that sharing mealtimes with other people can have psychological benefits, as we’re able to reflect on our day and feel connected with others. As an added benefit eating upright in chairs can also aid healthy digestion.

A food journal is also a great way to understand how food makes you feel and you’re eating patterns. Try noting down when you’re eating, how much, and how it made you feel, and see what patterns develop over time. It may also help you to recognise any food intolerances you may have.