

Mental Health Is Brain Health

10 Things to Know About Mental Health

Mental health is a critical and often underappreciated aspect of our overall well-being. It encompasses our emotional, psychological, and social functioning, and plays a crucial role in how we think, feel, and behave.

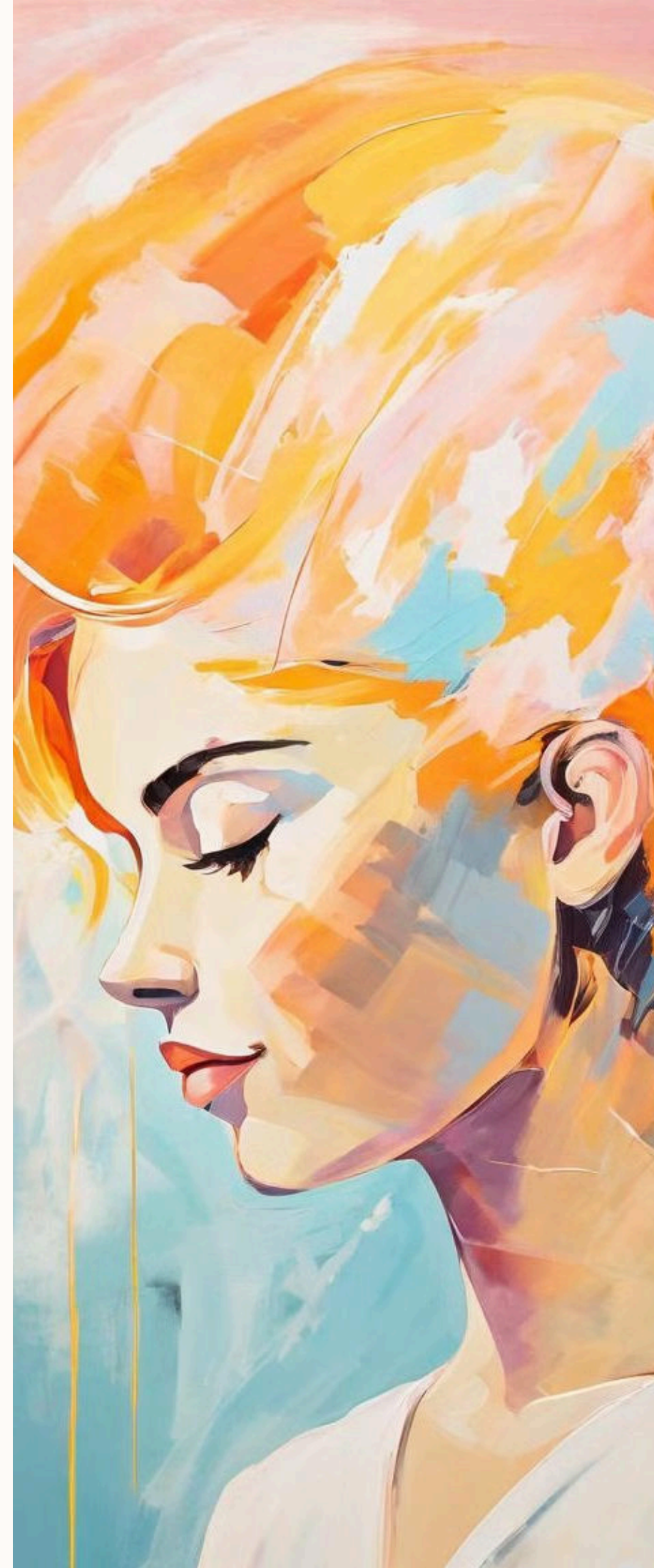
Mental health challenges can vary in severity. Some individuals may experience mild symptoms, while others may face more severe challenges. It's important to understand that mental health is a spectrum, and different individuals may experience different levels of distress.

It is essential to note that **not all mental health challenges require prescription medications as the first line of approach.** While medication can be an effective treatment option for some individuals, there are various other approaches available, such as right food, good quality sleep, moving more and sitting less, correcting nutritional deficiencies and correcting hormonal imbalances that are critical.

Disclaimer: Please note that the information provided here is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Please reach out to a healthcare professional for personalized guidance and support.

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1. Unlocking the Connection: From Metabolism to Mental Health

Did you know that your metabolic health can impact your mental well-being? Research suggests that the following factors can increase the risk of serious mental health challenges, such as major depression, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

- Pre-diabetes
- Diabetes
- Excess belly fat
- Fatty liver
- High blood pressure
- Unhealthy lipids

But fear not! There's a powerful key to improving mental health: maintaining stable blood glucose levels by **eating food that focuses on reducing carbohydrate intake and cutting back on processed foods, you can positively influence your mental well-being.**

2. Chronic Inflammation And Mental Health

Chronic Inflammation

High levels of chronic inflammation raise your risk of not only mental health conditions, but all chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke and dementia.

Chronic inflammation is like a simmering wildfire that constantly keeps your immune system on high alert.

Your food is one of the biggest sources of inflammation in your body.

Eat Mostly Anti-Inflammatory Food

In general, eating "real" food like meat, fish, eggs, sea food, vegetables, low-sugar fruit like berries, can lower inflammation levels.

High sugar, high carbohydrate food like bread, pasta, pizza, cakes, cookies, rice, several grains can raise your inflammation levels.

Reduce Continuous Sitting

Sitting continuously for several hours a day increases inflammation levels.

How many hours do you sit continuously in a day?

Here are a few strategies to interrupt continuous sitting:

1. Consider using a sit-stand desk
2. Walk for 5-10 minutes after every meal.
3. Schedule walking meetings
4. Do two wall pushes after you use the bathroom

Spend Time In Nature

Spending time in nature can help reduce inflammation and improve overall health. Studies have shown that being in nature can lower stress levels, boost mood, and reduce inflammation markers in the body.

Try to spend at least 30 minutes a day outside, whether it's going for a walk in the park, gardening, or simply sitting in a natural setting.

3. The Importance of Sleep

Quality sleep is essential for maintaining optimal mental health. During sleep, our brains undergo a critical process of consolidation and detoxification, where memories are strengthened, neural pathways are reinforced and toxins are removed. Adequate, high-quality sleep helps improve cognitive function, mood regulation, and emotional resilience. Without sufficient sleep, we become more susceptible to depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.

Many women experience chronic insomnia (difficulty falling or staying asleep) during the menopausal transition. This condition cannot be treated with sleeping pills. **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBTi) is the best treatment for chronic insomnia.**

To know more about sleep, listen to the following podcast episodes:

[Podcast episode Solutions For Chronic Insomnia- CBTi](#)

[Podcast episode: Herbs And Supplements For Sleep](#)



4. The Role of Protein in Mental Health

Protein plays a crucial role in maintaining optimal mental health by maintaining stable blood glucose levels.

Proteins are made of amino acids. Our bodies do not have the ability to make some amino acids, therefore we have to get it from our food and supplements.

Animal proteins are generally more readily utilized by the body. On the other hand, many plant-based protein sources, such as beans, also come with a substantial carbohydrate content

On average we need 1-1.2 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight a day. You need more protein if you are more active and as you grow older.

5. Reducing Sedentary Behavior and Increasing Movement

1 Break Up Prolonged Sitting

Sitting for extended periods can have detrimental effects on both physical and mental health. To combat the negative consequences of a sedentary lifestyle, it's important to regularly break up long stretches of sitting. This can be achieved by incorporating standing breaks, short walks, or simple desk-based exercises throughout the day. Even brief periods of movement can help improve circulation, boost energy levels, and alleviate the mental fatigue that often accompanies prolonged inactivity.

3 Explore the Outdoors

Spending time in nature has been linked to numerous mental health benefits. Connecting with the outdoors, whether through a leisurely hike, a park visit, or simply observing the natural world from a window, can have a calming and restorative effect on the mind. The combination of physical movement, exposure to natural light, and the opportunity to disconnect from the stresses of daily life can help alleviate symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.

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2 Engage In Moderate To High Intensity Exercise

Multiple studies have shown the benefits of higher intensity physical activity in mental health conditions. Engaging in higher intensity exercises, such as running, cycling, or high-intensity interval training (HIIT), weight training, has been found to have a positive impact on mental well-being.

When you engage in higher intensity physical activity, your body releases endorphins, which are natural mood-boosting chemicals. These endorphins help reduce stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression. Additionally, high-intensity exercise can improve cognitive function and increase self-esteem.

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6. The Benefits of B Vitamins

B vitamins are a group of essential micronutrients that play a crucial role in maintaining optimal mental health. These water-soluble vitamins, which include B1 (thiamine), B6, B9 (folate), and B12, support a wide range of cognitive and emotional functions, making them vital for supporting overall well-being.

B vitamins are essential for energy metabolism, converting the food we eat into the cellular fuel that powers our brains. By supporting mitochondrial function and ATP production, B vitamins can help combat fatigue, improve focus and concentration, and enhance overall cognitive performance.

People who eat mostly vegan or vegetarian food are at a high risk for vitamin B12 deficiencies.



7. Maintaining Healthy Iron Levels

The Importance of Iron

Iron is an essential mineral that plays a vital role in supporting mental health. It is a key component of hemoglobin, the protein in red blood cells responsible for transporting oxygen throughout the body, including to the brain. Without sufficient iron, the brain may not receive the oxygen it needs to function optimally, leading to cognitive impairment, fatigue, and an increased risk of mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

Iron Deficiency Is Common

Iron deficiency is one of the most common nutrient deficiencies worldwide. Groups at higher risk of iron deficiency include women, especially during menstruation and pregnancy, vegetarians and vegans, and individuals with certain medical conditions that impair iron absorption. Symptoms of iron deficiency can include tiredness, weakness, headaches, and difficulty concentrating, all of which can negatively impact mental well-being.

Boosting Iron Intake

1. Incorporate iron-rich food such as red meat, poultry, seafood.
2. Consider taking an iron supplement, especially if you are at higher risk of deficiency or have been diagnosed with anemia.
3. Monitor your iron levels through regular blood tests and work with your healthcare provider to address any deficiencies.

8. Understanding Menopause and Mental Health

The transition into menopause can have a profound impact on a woman's mental health. As hormone levels fluctuate and the body undergoes significant physiological changes, many women experience an increased risk of developing mood disorders, such as depression and anxiety and brain fog.

Hormones like estrogen and progesterone are locally produced in the brain and impact mental health and risks for dementia. Low progesterone levels are related to poor sleep and higher levels of anxiety.

In addition to the hormonal factors, the psychological and social adjustments that come with menopause can also contribute to mental health challenges. Women may struggle with the loss of fertility, changes in their physical appearance, and the sense of aging and mortality.

Fortunately, there are strategies that can help women manage the mental health implications of menopause. Seeking support from healthcare providers, engaging in regular physical activity, eating the right food and exploring appropriate hormone therapy can all be effective in mitigating the emotional challenges associated with this transition.

9. Thyroid Function and Mental Wellbeing

The thyroid gland, a small, butterfly-shaped organ located in the neck, plays a crucial role in regulating the body's metabolism, energy levels, and overall physiological functioning. However, its influence extends far beyond just physical health - the thyroid gland also has a profound impact on mental well-being.

Thyroid dysfunction, including both hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) and hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid), can lead to a range of mental health concerns. Individuals with an underactive thyroid may experience symptoms such as fatigue, depression, anxiety, memory problems, and difficulty concentrating. On the other hand, an overactive thyroid can result in irritability, mood swings, restlessness, and even panic attacks.

Talk to your healthcare provider to get the right tests done.

[Read about Hypothyroidism and Depression here.](#)





10. Meaningful Relationships

Social Connections and Support

Strong social connections and a sense of community are essential for maintaining mental health. Engaging with others through meaningful relationships, support groups, or community-based activities can help alleviate feelings of isolation, provide a sense of belonging, and foster a greater sense of purpose and fulfillment. By nurturing these social ties, individuals can build resilience, cope with stress more effectively, and cultivate a greater sense of overall well-being.

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