



## Nutrition and Mental Wellness:

1. The substances our body uses to make neurochemicals comes from what we ingest. In the case of serotonin, it takes the amino acid Tryptophan. We know Tryptophan is plentiful in turkey but there are other foods that contains high amounts of the amino acid such as oats, peanuts, and bananas. A variety of foods are needed to build each neurotransmitter needed for optimal brain function.
2. Having a varied diet protects from missing out on necessary nutrients. For those who eat strictly French fries and chicken nuggets, nutrients like vitamin A & E will be lacking.
3. The foods we eat come with added risks or benefits. Diets high in sugar increase levels of inflammation in the body which can worsen mental illness. Diets rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals from fresh fruits and vegetables protect the brain and promote healing.
4. The majority of serotonin, our “feel good” chemical is made in the gut. Having a well-balanced, nutrient dense diet helps the lining of the gut to create this necessary hormone for our brain.
5. Good Bacteria or the microbiome of the body is another important factor in brain health. Studies in this field are vast and finding that these microscopic organisms help send messages to the brain and produce nerve signaling that affect our emotions. *Lactobacillus* is a good place to start.
6. Dietary preferences, food sensitivities, and nutritional needs can be complex. It is best to choose foods that are well tolerated and helpful for your specific condition. For example, Omega 3 fats such as walnuts and salmon can ease depression. Food high in magnesium like spinach and pumpkins seeds can calm anxiety.
7. Many foods make us feel a certain way for choosing them. For example, “I was bad today. I ate candy” or “I am doing great. I ate broccoli and chicken”. Negative emotions surround specific foods and separating our emotions from the food we eat takes effort.