



Nutrition and Depression

There is a strong link between physical and mental health. The foundations of being healthy include nutrition, exercise, sleep and managing stress.

You can improve your mood through the foods you eat. Here's how:

Looking after your digestive system

There is a strong connection between the health of your digestive system (your stomach and intestines) and your mental health. Depression is linked to inflammation in the digestive system. The tiny organisms in your digestive system are called the 'microbiome'. The microbiome plays a key role in how your body breaks down food and it heavily relies on a diet that is rich with a large variety of foods from the five food groups.



Food for healthy digestion

Prebiotic or **high fibre** foods feed the good bacteria in our digestive system. The bacteria break down the high fibre foods which reduces inflammation and makes digestion easier. Some key sources of prebiotics include whole fruits and vegetables, wholegrains, legumes, lentils, garlic and dates.

Probiotic or **fermented** foods contain live, active micro-organisms and help introduce new bacteria to the digestive system keeping it healthy. Foods like yoghurt, pickles, kefir (fermented milk), kimchi, dosa or Yakult™ contain probiotics and can improve your digestion and boost your mood.



Eat more fruits and vegetables

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend that we consume a variety of foods and aim to have 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables a day. Fruit and vegetables have nutrients and minerals that can improve mental health. These nutrients can be found in foods such as:

- Citrus fruits and papaya (**Vitamin C**)
- Dark leafy green vegetables (**Folate and Zinc**)
- Avocados and all types of beans (**Magnesium**)
- Sweet potatoes, carrots, capsicum (**Vitamin A**)

Vitamin D – The sunshine vitamin

Vitamin D plays a large role in your mental health. It's important to get your vitamin D levels tested regularly and aim for at **20-30 minutes** of sun exposure everyday day to help support your health and mood.

Food sources include **soy** or **dairy** products that have added Vitamin D, **egg yolks** and **shellfish** or a **Vitamin D supplement** if getting enough sun exposure is difficult.



The importance of good fats

Good fats play an important role in making sure we stay full and regulate our hormones. **Omega-3** fats, found in oily fish, nuts and seeds, avocado, canola oil and olive oil or as a supplement, can help boost our mood.

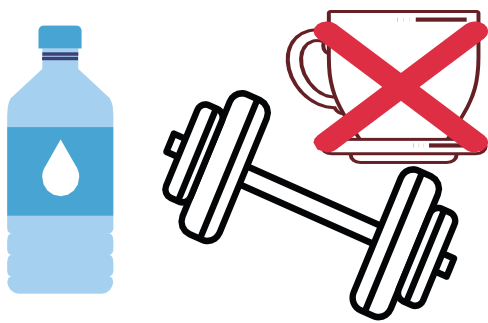
Aim to have **2 – 3** serves of fish per week or **30g** of nuts/seeds or an Omega-3 supplement.



Improving your sleeping patterns

Having a consistent sleep schedule, aiming for 5-7 hours of sleep regularly, can help support your body's immune system and function as well as aid in regulating your mental health.

Reducing screen time 2-3 hours before sleeping, limiting caffeine to 1-2 cups or swapping for un-processed caffeine or an herbal tea (e.g. lemon grass, orange blossom, oolong) and limit alcohol consumption where possible throughout the day can help to improve sleep.



Serving sizes

An easy way to make sure you're having the right serving size or portions of food is by measuring them with your hands.

A guideline to remember is:

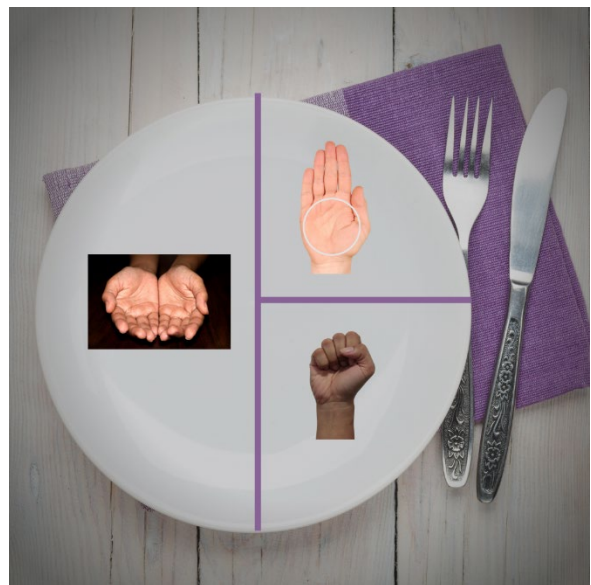
- **half** a plate of vegetables is equal to **two open** hands,
- a flat **palm** is equal to **one serve** of meat or meat alternatives and
- **one fist** is equal to **one serve** of carbohydrates (rice, pasta, noodles, potato).

Getting more exercise

Being active and doing some form of physical activity can boost your mood through the release of a chemical compound known as endorphins (the happy hormone).

Exercising more also increases your energy levels, improves sleep and can help reduce the risk of depression.

Aim to get **10 to 30** minutes of exercise daily through social walking groups, yoga, or an exercise of your choice.



Need some extra support? Speak to the team at World Wellness Group to help get you in touch with a Dietitian and/ or a Mental Health Practitioner