



Holistic nutrition includes body, mind and spirit.

Psychological Health: Diet and Depression - August 2017

It is possible for us eat drink and be merry (literally)? It depends on what we eat and drink.

It is a great joy to watch my clients who have made changes to a healthier diet and lifestyle changes to manage their stress, become more fully alive and functioning at a higher level. Feeding their brains the nutrients needed can make a significant improvement.

Research looking at diet shows that those consuming a traditional diet, rich in fermented foods, have significantly lower levels of depression and anxiety (25-30%) than those who consume a Westernized diet.

Examination of some of the body processes tell us that there are many physical imbalances in play for those with mood disorders. People who suffer from depression have chronic, low-grade inflammation, more oxidative stress and blood sugar issues.

They also have gut dysbiosis which results in the production of a toxin known as LPS (lipopolysaccharide), produced by bad bacteria. In fact, LPS is directly linked to the production of inflammation and oxidative stress, two physical factors that have been linked to depression. It also is connected to negatively affecting the central nervous system, which plays a role in regulating mood and depression.

How do traditional diets help regulate these body processes and help mental health? There are two ways:

Traditional diets are loaded with whole foods that contain phytonutrients which help lower inflammation and contain plenty of antioxidants which can protect

against oxidative stress. Many whole foods are also prebiotic and help feed our good bacteria.

Traditional diets contain fermented foods which are high in lactobacillus and bifidobacterium. Studies of both probiotics and fermented foods show that these families of good bacteria can lower chronic inflammation, provide increased antioxidant protection and decrease levels of LPS.

LPS also can damage the intestinal wall lining and open up the gut. Good bacteria protects the gut wall lining and keeps the gut closed.

How can fermented foods help with depression and mental health?

When the fibre found in wheat, rice and soy is fermented, it promotes better glucose levels and immune function and lowers inflammation. Fermentation of these foods as well as others such as lentils and buckwheat sprouts help the beneficial gut bacteria produce more GABA, a neurotransmitter known for reducing anxiety.

Fermented dairy products such as kefir and yogurt also help mood. One study of participants consuming fermented dairy, non-fermented dairy and no dairy, found that those who consumed the fermented dairy had higher activity in their brains in the regions that controlled emotions and sensations.

It is believed that the reason for these changes is that fermenting of the milk bioactivates peptides and other chemicals that affects the central nervous system.

One human study using herbs in traditional cultures, compared fermented versions of the herbs with non-fermented. The fermented form lowered LPS and increased lactobacillus strains in the stool. Fermented herb products are now appearing in the health foods store but we can also add herbs when we make our own fermented foods such as sauerkraut, cultured vegetables and kimchi.

Lactobacillus strains produced from fermenting cabbage as in the case of kimchi and sauerkraut improves mental function.

And this may be the best news for those who like to celebrate with food and drink. Regular, modest consumption of wine (2-7 glasses a week) as part of a whole food diet, is associated with lower systemic inflammation, increases in bifidobacteria and lower levels of depression. And no, you cannot have all 7 glasses in one day, once a week.

There are plenty of fermented foods options and it is easy to create great recipes

combining whole foods, herbs and spices, fermented foods and wine. And consuming all of these on a regular basis can lift mood, improved mental health and overall health. It can be quite the adventure in food so eat, drink and be merry.

See my sauerkraut recipe below the references.

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Lacto Fermented Sauerkraut

1 500 ml (pint) canning jar
1/4 organic green cabbage
1-1/2 tsp (8 ml) sea salt

Chop cabbage into shreds or tiny pieces. Place in a bowl and sprinkle with sea salt. Rub the sea salt into the cabbage to draw out the liquid. The cabbage will start to wilt. Once some liquid has collected at the

bottom of the bowl, start adding the cabbage to the jar. Press and pack the cabbage down with a wooden or plastic utensil. Continue until all the cabbage is in the jar. Leave an inch (25 mm) space at the top of the jar. Add a weight to keep the cabbage pressed down and submerged in the liquid. (no metal) Try using a smaller jar inside the bigger jar, with stones or marbles in the smaller jar. Cover the jar with a clean cloth, cheesecloth or paper coffee filter and secure it with an elastic band. Ferment for 3-10 days. If a foamy scum forms on top, just scoop it off. Placing a piece of a cabbage leaf on top of the fermenting cabbage before adding the weight will sometimes prevent the scum from forming. The scum is not harmful. Once the cabbage has reached the taste and texture you like, cover it with a lid and refrigerate. You can add caraway or celery seed for extra flavour.

**Be healthy 4 life,
Cathy Ferren RHN**

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