

Review your gut-mental health relationship

Everything you consume offers the opportunity to support your mental health. For several decades, researchers have been exploring the brain-gut relationship, and they've discovered several connections. In short, the foods and drinks you consume can boost your brain function, promote healthy digestion and improve your overall emotional and mental state. Likewise, they can have the opposite effect.

Use this worksheet to take a snapshot of how what you eat could be impacting how you feel.

Answer the following questions:

Mentally, I feel _____

Emotionally, I feel _____

Physically, my body feels _____

My gut feels _____

Last night, I slept _____

Next, write down what you've consumed in the past 24 hours:

Now, check all that apply to what you've eaten or drank in the past 24 hours:

Nutrient-rich fuels for your brain and gut health:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Whole grains, such as bread, brown rice, quinoa
- Legumes, such as lentils, chickpeas, soybeans, and kidney, black or pinto beans
- Fish and seafood
- Poultry
- Unsaturated fats like those found in oily salmon, mackerel, sardines, avocados, seeds, nuts, olive oil, canola oil
- Probiotics, such as those found in yogurt, sauerkraut, tempeh and kimchi
- Water

Nutrient-poor foods:

- Processed foods, especially those high in saturated fat, salt and sugar, such as pre-packaged instant and canned soups, deli meats, sausages, snacks and breakfast cereals
- Refined sugars (from cane, beets, coconut, palm and corn), such as those used in prepackaged drinks, baked goods and other processed foods and beverages
- Alcohol

Based on these results, I:

Saw a connection between what I ate and how I feel. Explain: _____

Should consider eating more _____ to fuel my brain and promote my gut health.

Should consider eating less _____ to better support my overall health and wellness.

Repeat this exercise from time to time – a “gut check” on your mind, body and mental health connections.

American Society for Nutrition. How to boost mental health through better nutrition. nutrition.org/how-to-boost-mental-health-through-better-nutrition/. Accessed October 16, 2023.

BetterHealth Channel. Food and your mood. betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/food-and-your-mood. Accessed October 16, 2023.

BetterHealth. Gut health. betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/gut-health. Accessed October 16, 2023.

Dietitians Australia. Diet and nutrition health advice: Mental health including anxiety and depression. dietitiansaustralia.org.au/health-advice/mental-health-including-anxiety-and-depression. Accessed October 16, 2023.

Harvard Health. Nutritional psychiatry: Your brain on food. health.harvard.edu/blog/nutritional-psychiatry-your-brain-on-food-201511168626. Accessed October 16, 2023.

Mental Health Foundation. Diet and mental health. mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/diet-and-mental-health. Accessed October 16, 2023.

Mind Food and mental health. mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/food-and-mental-health/. Accessed October 16, 2023.

WF11986708 310749-112023