



Nourish Your Mental Health

With everything going on in our personal lives, work lives, and the world, it can get quite overwhelming. And sometimes, our best coping mechanism becomes distracting ourselves or pushing forward rather than turning to self-care. For Mental Health week this May, Canadians have the opportunity to prioritize mental health. There are many factors that can impact our mental health, but did you know that food and nutrition also play a role?

Check out these 5 foods that can help you nourish your physical and mental health:

1. Nuts & seeds

They are great sources of healthy fats, fibre and plant-based protein. But that's not all! Nuts and seeds also have a compound called tryptophan which helps produce the mood-boosting hormone, serotonin. They are also great sources of zinc, which is associated with lower rates of depression when consumed in adequate amounts. Good sources of tryptophan and zinc are almonds, Brazil nuts, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds.

2. Fatty fish

Salmon, tuna, trout, sardines, herring, and mackerel, are incredible sources of omega-3 fatty acids. Specifically, fatty fish are rich in the omega-3s, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), which may decrease levels of depression. To reap these benefits, eat fatty fish twice per week and you'll get all the DHA and EPA you need.

3. Coffee

If you're someone who loves coffee, it may help you stay alert, but also put you in a good mood. Some studies have shown, coffee increases the release of dopamine, A.K.A the "feel-good" hormone. Although research is still needed, caffeinated, and decaffeinated coffee may have this affect. Enjoying a nice cup of coffee in the morning can do great things for your mood, just make sure to monitor your intake.



4. Dark chocolate

Chocolate's delicious taste, smooth texture and pleasurable smell alone can put people in a good mood. It also contains some caffeine, and is rich in flavonoids, a group of plant pigments that may increase blood flow to the brain, boost brain health and lower inflammation (all of which help regulate mood). So, add 1-2 squares of chocolate to your oatmeal, shave them onto your yogurt, or enjoy them with some fresh fruit for a mood-boosting snack.

5. Fermented foods

Natural probiotics and good bacteria are made during the fermentation process of foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and kimchi. Therefore, these foods are great for our gut health. Research has been showing that when our gut is healthy, our brain is healthy. So, enjoy fermented foods to improve not only your gut health but your brain health, too!

If you'd like to incorporate some of these foods into your diet, contact your FSEAP Registered Dietitian today. Through personalized care, a well-stocked resource bank and check-ins, you will have the support and motivation to keep you going this month and beyond. Your dietitian will be there every step of the way to discuss your goals and provide you strategies to help you succeed. So, nourish your mental health and contact your FSEAP Registered Dietitian today.