

Nutrition and Mental Health

WHY DOES IT MATTER

- What we eat influences our physical *and* mental health
- Thunder Bay has high rates of mental illness and mental health conditions, chronic disease and low fruit and vegetable intake, which are all connected
- What we eat on a regular basis has the most impact on our health

THE HUMAN BRAIN

- Complex structure; has the hungriest cells in the body
- The brain is 2% of the body's weight, but uses 20% of the body's energy!
- Affected in the short *and* long term by what people eat and drink

HOW DOES FOOD AFFECT OUR BRAIN

- **Energy**—our brain needs fuel and lots of it
- **Structure**—healthy fats help build and support neurons (the brain's structure)
- **Neurotransmitters**—help our brain communicate with the rest of the body
- **Our gut**—important brain functions rely on a healthy gut
- **Antioxidants**—help protect the neurons (structure) of our brain
- **Fluid Intake**—dehydration can decrease brain function

HOW TO EAT TO IMPROVE MOOD

- Regular intake of nutritious foods and beverages can lead to better mental health
- A variety of nutritious foods, especially plant-based foods, provide important vitamins, minerals and antioxidants for our brain to function at its best
- Focus on:
 - Vegetables
 - Fruits
 - Whole grains
 - Beans, legumes, nuts and seeds
 - Omega-3 fatty acids (eg. fish, vegetable oils (olive, canola), nuts and seeds)
 - Water as the drink of choice
 - Less highly processed foods (high in sodium, salt and/or saturated fat).



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To speak to a Dietitian for free, call Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000
- For more nutrition resources, visit the website Unlock Food: www.unlockfood.ca
- For mental wellness information and resources, visit the Superior Mental Wellness @ Work website: www.superiormentalwellnessatwork.com

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