



Can nutrients affect your mood?

With all the stresses that go along with contemporary life, it is easy to believe that mood is affected strictly by environmental circumstances. However, this may not be completely true. The more we learn about nutrients, the more we realize how nutrients are needed for a wide variety of brain functions.

Question: Is there scientific evidence that nutrient deficiencies can affect a person's mood?

Answer: It has been known for a long time that several nutrients affect brain function. Researchers are steadily identifying specific nutrient functions in the brain that are tied to specific mood and mental problems.

Since many essential nutrients are required to synthesize important brain chemicals, it is clear that adequate nutrition can play a major role in a person's mood.

Q: What nutrients are involved in mood regulation?

A: Nutrients that have been linked to mood and depression include folate, vitamins B-1, B-12, and B-6, iron, selenium, and omega-3 fatty acids, to name just a few. Those who are most at risk of mood problems related to nutrient deficiencies are women of child-

bearing age, especially during and after pregnancy. However, marginal deficiencies can develop in most anyone who is not meeting their nutrient needs for an extended period of time.

Q: What foods supply these key nutrients?

A: The best way to make sure that you're consuming adequate amounts of the nutrients listed above is to have a variety of foods from all food groups. Any time someone eliminates a food group, they run the risk of consuming too little of an essential nutrient.

Q: Can taking dietary supplements help to meet these nutrient needs?

A: There are certain groups of individuals that may benefit from taking a daily type of multivitamin mineral supplement. These individuals include those consuming a limited amount of calories (such as older sedentary people), individuals trying to lose weight, and those who have had bariatric surgery.

Q: Can you get too much of these nutrients?

A: Essential nutrients have a safe range of intake. For some nutrients, the range is fairly wide and for others it can be quite narrow. So, the goal is to stay in the safe

ranges. Consuming excessive amounts of essential nutrients can eventually cause health problems.

Generally individuals meeting nutrient needs from foods will not be at risk for getting an excessive amount of any particular nutrient. However, excessive use of dietary supplements can more easily lead to excessive intake.

Some dietary supplements on the market contain nutrient levels that would not be recommended for general use and should only be used with proper guidance for a limited period of time to normalize nutrient status.

The best way to stay on an even keel is to consume a variety of foods in moderate amounts from all the major food groups. For those experiencing depression or mood problems as well as those with limited diets, the proper use of dietary supplements can be a life-saver.

For maintaining a good nutrient status it is best to not take supplements that significantly exceed 100% of the "Daily Value" listed on the label. However, to recover from nutrient-related mood problems may require greater doses with the guidance of a health professional.

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