



## Monthly Wellness Bulletin

# Food and Mood

### Have you ever:

- Grazed from the refrigerator at the end of a bad day?
- Soothed mid-morning gloom with a cinnamon roll?
- Reached for a bag of chips when you're feeling down in the dumps?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, **you are not alone!** At one time or another, most of us turn to food for comfort, relaxation, or some kind of solace. In most cases, the single or sporadic indulgence is harmless and comforting. Sometimes, though, we unknowingly choose foods that make us feel worse and set up a vicious cycle of bad eating habits. In fact, many foods we choose can aggravate depression, insomnia, fatigue, food cravings, stress and memory loss, and can hinder good mental and emotional health. These habits can be setting us up for SERIOUS, long-term health issues!

**Making small changes in what and when we eat can have profound effects** on how we feel right now, tomorrow, and in the future. The link between mood and food is cyclical. For instance, if the initial problem is poor eating habits, then depression, mood swings, poor concentration, or fatigue can develop due to the deficiencies or excesses in the diet; which, in turn, can lead to more poor food choices. People make less effort to eat properly when they are stressed, tired or depressed, and in turn, it is the poor nutritional choices that exacerbate these same emotional conditions. Before we realize it, we feel bad, don't know why, and have no idea what to do about it. Many people put up with feeling poorly, ignore the red flags, and live with the discomfort of “just getting by.”

### Simple Examples of Long-Term and Short-Term Effects:

Fail to drink calcium-rich milk and develop osteoporosis; eat too much red meat and other foods high in saturated fats and develop heart disease. These conditions can take decades to develop, but the food-mood connection is immediate. What we eat directly and indirectly alters the chemicals (some called neurotransmitters) in our body, which in turn influences our moods, energy level, food cravings, stress level, and sleep habits. **Here's why:** Neurotransmitters are composed of either amino acids (the building blocks of protein obtained from the diet), or a fat-like substance called choline (also obtained from the diet). When you consume too little of one or more of these dietary building blocks, your body limits production of neurotransmitters and you experience changes in mood, appetite and thinking. If your diet is insufficient or imbalanced, the neurotransmitters are not made or stored in sufficient amounts, and you feel grumpy or “foggy-headed.” Imagine the long-term effects of this chemical reaction in our bodies!!!

**To break the cycle you need to realize that you are not only what you eat, but you also eat what you are.** Your food choices have profound effects on your energy level, mood, sleep habits, etc. Your long-term and short-term health is intricately linked to what you choose to eat from one meal to the next **(and in between).**

**Take action now! Talk to one of our doctors today to schedule a Nutrition Consultation! 314.644.2081**

