

# NUTRITION AND BRAIN HEALTH

*More important than you think!*

YOUR BODY'S  
FUEL

MICRONUTRIENTS

GUT  
HEALTH

INTRO

CONCLUSION



**WHAT YOU EAT HAS A BIG  
IMPACT ON YOUR PHYSICAL  
HEALTH, BUT WHAT ABOUT  
YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?**



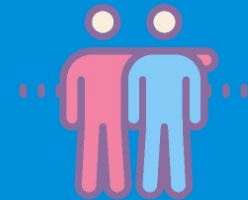
**WHAT IS  
MENTAL  
HEALTH?**

**SELF-CARE**

**WARNING!**

# ***YOUR MENTAL HEALTH INCLUDES SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING***

Social well-being: Your degree of contentment with your relationships and place in the community



Emotional well-being: Awareness of emotions, ability to cope with positive or negative feelings



Psychological well-being: Your overall emotional health and ability to function



**JUST LIKE YOUR BODY CAN BE  
HEALTHY OR UNHEALTHY AT  
TIMES, SO CAN YOUR MIND!**

When you feel down, anxious or stressed out, your mind needs care, just like your body does when it's feeling run down. Maybe you get some extra sleep, watch your favorite movie or call a friend. Making sure you get proper nutrition is another way to nourish your mind and practice self-care!

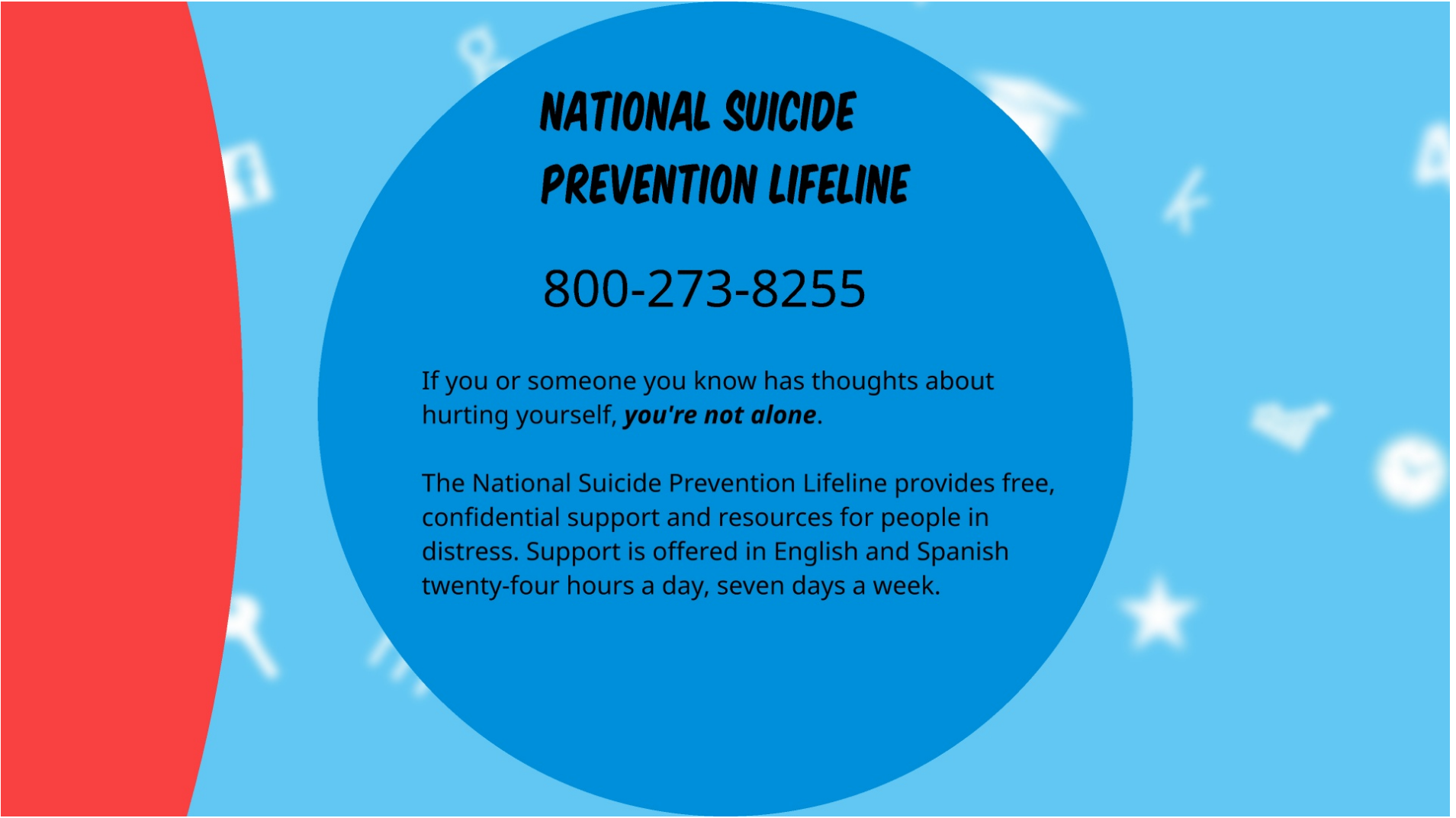


## **CAUTION! VERY IMPORTANT:**

**Many mental health conditions may require the help of a doctor or mental health professional. Proper nutrition will not "cure" a mental health disorder. You have *not failed* if nutrition doesn't make you feel better!**

Always take care of yourself. You deserve it!

**HOTLINE**

The graphic features a large blue circle in the center of a light blue background. To the left of the circle is a red curved shape. The background is decorated with faint white symbols including a scale, a heart, a star, and various letters. The text is centered within the blue circle.

## **NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE**

**800-273-8255**

If you or someone you know has thoughts about hurting yourself, ***you're not alone.***

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides free, confidential support and resources for people in distress. Support is offered in English and Spanish twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

# **PART 1: HOW DOES NUTRITION IMPACT THE WAY YOU FEEL?**

How do you feel when you go too long without eating, or when you don't eat enough?



**FOOD IS FUEL**

**FEELING  
"HANGRY"**

## **LOW BLOOD SUGAR & MOOD**

Have you ever realized you've gone longer than usual without eating? While it's not a big deal to miss a meal once in a while, not eating enough can substantially affect your body and brain.

*Food is fuel, and your brain needs it to function!*



Without enough "fuel," you may feel tired or weak!



## HAVE YOU EVER FELT HUNGRY AND ANGRY, OR "HANGRY?"



Many people have experienced feeling irritable or angry when they have gone longer than usual without eating. Not eating regularly causes the level of glucose in your blood, or "blood sugar," to drop.



When your blood sugar drops, your brain releases hormones including **cortisol** and **adrenaline**. Cortisol is the body's primary stress hormone, and adrenalin helps activate the fight-or-flight response. Together, they're a recipe for feeling stressed and irritable!

## **PART 2: HOW DOES NUTRITION IMPACT THE WAY YOU FEEL?**

How does consuming certain micronutrients affect your mood?



**B-COMPLEX  
VITAMINS**

**VITAMIN D**

**OMEGA-3**

## VITAMINS B-12, B-6 AND FOLATE

Consuming vitamins B-12, B-6 and folate, all part of the "B-complex group", aid your brain in making serotonin. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter sometimes called the "happy hormone" because it produces feelings of happiness and contentment! Higher levels of the vitamins have also been associated with thinking more clearly.



*Foods high in B-complex vitamins include leafy greens, eggs and milk, legumes and most animal proteins.*



# VITAMIN D

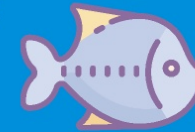
Not having enough Vitamin D in your body has been linked to a significantly greater risk of depression. Researchers think that Vitamin D is important to many parts of healthy brain functioning!



Vitamin D is sometimes called the "sunshine" vitamin because our bodies absorb the vitamin mainly through sun exposure. Too much sun exposure has other risks, however, so taking a Vitamin D supplement is not a bad idea!

## OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Omega-3 fatty acids may help improve symptoms of depression, particularly for people who don't find much relief from antidepressants or other medications.



*Omega-3 fatty acids are found mainly in fish oil, so fatty fish like salmon, herring and tuna are great sources! It's also easy to find Omega-3 supplements in your local pharmacy.*

## **PART 3: HOW DOES NUTRITION AFFECT THE WAY YOU FEEL?**

How does your gut health  
affect your level of anxiety?



**WHAT IS GUT  
HEALTH?**

**YOUR BRAIN AND  
GUT HEALTH**

**ANXIETY AND  
GUT HEALTH**

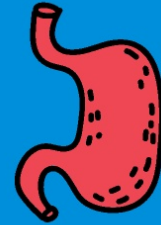
**WHAT TO DO**

# WHAT IS "GUT HEALTH," ANYWAYS?

"Gut health" refers to the function and balance of the bacteria in your gastrointestinal (GI) tract or digestive system. This includes your esophagus, stomach and intestines.



When your gut is healthy, you'll be able to consume and digest food with little to no discomfort. If your gut health is disrupted, you might experience things like bloating, constipation or diarrhea.



## **YOUR BRAIN AND YOUR GUT**

It may seem strange, but your brain and your gut are in constant communication. For example, just the thought of eating can release your stomach's juices before food arrives there.

A troubled gut can send signals to the brain, and a troubled brain can send signals to your gut. The connection goes both ways. Your gut is very sensitive to emotional responses!





## ANXIETY AND GUT HEALTH

Have you ever felt sick to your stomach when you were really stressed? Because of the brain-gut connection, feeling stressed or anxious can trigger unpleasant gut symptoms like a stomachache, nausea or diarrhea.

The **opposite** is also true:

**An upset gut can send signals to your brain that produce feelings of anxiety and stress.**



## SO, HOW DO YOU HELP YOUR GUT HEALTH?

Recommendations to improve gut health include:

- \*Lowering stress levels
- \*Getting enough sleep
- \*Eating slowly
- \*Staying hydrated
- \*Eating fewer refined carbs and more fruit, vegetables, beans and yogurt--all foods that help keep your gut healthy!



## **CONCLUSION: NOURISH AND LISTEN TO YOUR BODY!**

As you've seen throughout this presentation, what you eat can affect your emotional well-being in numerous ways!

Eating a balanced diet of consistent meals, nutritional variety and fewer refined carbohydrates will help to support your emotional health.

Also: Listen to your body! Pay attention to how you feel when you eat different kinds of meals. Your body might have a lot to tell you.



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