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Understanding the Physical and Emotional Effects of Food

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The latest nutrition research and an improved understanding of the mind-gut connection show us that what we eat can significantly affect how we feel – emotionally and physically. Nearly one in five U.S. adults struggle with mental illness such as obsessive compulsive disorder, anxiety, depression, and related conditions. Mental Health Awareness Month reminds us how taking care of our mental health is necessary to achieve physical health goals like weight loss.

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What's Happening this Month:

- * Make sure to download the Baritastic app and join using our Capital Health code (76777). Use the app to log your food and get recommendations from your dietitian, be reminded of program events and updates, and access recipes!
- * Our Bariatric Support Group for post-weight loss surgery patients is **Wednesday May 24 from 5 – 6 p.m.** All support groups are held virtually, so please check the Baritastic app, our online support group or your email (check junk mail!) for the link to access, or message your dietitian to receive the link.
- * Our **Medical Weight Loss Support Group for all New Direction Patients is May 24 from 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.** All support groups are held virtually, so please check the Baritastic app or your email (check junk mail!) for the link to access. Email registered dietitian Emily Santora at esantora@capitalhealth.org if you need the link. Our Medical Weight Loss Program features Robard's great tasting New Direction Products! Weekly visits with our dietitians help you develop an individualized plan and lifestyle skills to help you lose weight and keep it off! To get started, call our office at 609.537.6777 to schedule your screening with Dr. Anwar.
- * If you had surgery and are not a member of our Post-Op Online Support Group, the Capital Health D.R.E.A.M. Team, please send an email to clazur@capitalhealth.org so Caroline can send you the link and accept your request. This is a great way to obtain support from our program and other post-op patients in our program, 24/7!
- * Are you or someone in your life thinking about weight loss surgery? Schedule a virtual information session with Dr. Chung, our bariatric surgeon, on **May 2 at 7 p.m.** To register, visit capitalhealth.org/weightloss or call our office to speak to Brelynn, our coordinator, at 609.537.6777.

UNDERSTANDING THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL EFFECTS OF FOOD *continued*



Dealing with Stress

We see many patients deal with high levels of stress at times, which can negatively affect their weight loss journey. Some people easily identify themselves as stress eaters, while others might not recognize it until they encounter a major stress event for the first time. When you are in a stressed state, hunger levels can increase and your brain can block your fullness cues. Understanding how to manage your stress is crucial to your weight loss journey. Try these tips to help with stress management:

Simple Ways to De-Stress

- **Music:** Play your favorite song or make a playlist of tunes that boost your mood or help you relax. YouTube, Spotify, and Apple Music are good options for finding playlists (or creating your own) to de-stress or match your mood.
- **Find your Zen:** Set up an area at home (or any place you can) where you can unwind and relax. Make sure the area is comfortable and free of clutter. Scented candles, air fresheners, or diffusers can bring comfort or have mood-boosting abilities, so don't be afraid to experiment and find your favorite.
- **Hobbies:** Be sure to take time for the things you enjoy, such as reading, video games, or crafts like knitting. Don't be afraid to explore more artistic options like adult coloring books or paint-by-numbers kits.
- **Exercise:** The power of exercise to help with stress cannot be overstated. Even taking just 10 minutes to go on a walk or follow along with a stretching video can help.
- **Nature:** Connecting with the great outdoors can inspire calmness, joy, and creativity. It also has been shown to facilitate concentration and improve anxiety and depression.



Food for Mental Health

When it comes to weight loss, we tend to think less is more. However, the quality of your diet is just as important for weight loss as it is for mental health. Make sure your diet has:

- **Healthy fats:** To increase your intake of healthy fats, add more nuts, olive oil, and fatty fish such as salmon and tuna into your diet. A little healthy fat with meals goes a long way, so you can enjoy their maximum benefits without interfering with your weight loss goals.
- **Fruits and veggies:** They contain antioxidants that protect against neuronal damage in the brain, resulting in improvement of depression or anxiety symptoms. Add more fruits and vegetables to every meal and snack.
- **Carbohydrates:** Current fad diets often promote low-carb options, but carbohydrates break down to become our brain's main energy source. Restricting your carb intake too much can lead to brain fog, depression, fatigue, and sluggishness. Instead of focusing on eliminating carbs, pay more attention to your portion sizes. You can get carbohydrates from healthy sources, so make an effort to include fruits, veggies, dairy and high-fiber starches with your meals and snacks.



UNDERSTANDING THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL EFFECTS OF FOOD *continued*



Support Groups and Therapy

Our bariatric patients, as well as those in our Medical Weight Loss Program, have access to support groups through Capital Health's Metabolic and Weight Loss Center. Sharing experiences with those who are going through the same process as you and have the same goals can be very beneficial. Look for emails and reminders about dates and times for these support groups, or ask your dietitian for more information.



Steps for Finding a Therapist

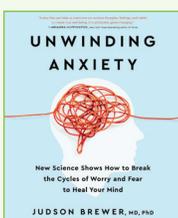
(adapted from "7 Steps to Finding the Right Therapist for You" at psychologytoday.com)

- 1. Determine what kind of support you need.**
 - **Grief counseling** – for dealing with the passing of a family member or friend.
 - **Cognitive behavioral therapy** – for those struggling with anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, depression.
- 2. Explore your options.**
 - Reach out to your primary care provider for a **referral**.
 - Ask family or friends for **recommendations**.
 - Contact your insurance provider for **referrals for covered mental health professionals** or do a search on your insurance company website.
 - Use **online resources** such as betterhelp.com, talkspace.com, or the "Find a Therapist" feature on psychologytoday.com.
- 3. Contact potential therapists and find the right one for you.**
 - Not every therapist is going to be the right one for you. It may take trial and error to **find someone that you connect with**, so do not give up!

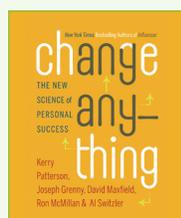
Products of the Month

Recommended Reading for Mental Health Awareness Month

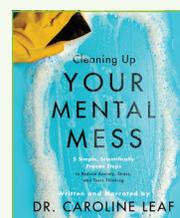
Enjoy hardcopy or audio versions of these book for great insights into your mental health. Available at bookstores or Amazon.



Unwinding Anxiety
by Judson Brewer



Change Anything
by Kerry Patterson



Cleaning Up Your Mental Mess
by Dr. Caroline Leaf

