

# NEWSLETTER

*The latest news and updates from Exmouth Wellness Centre and  
Margaret River Wellness Centre*

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## BRAIN FOOD - NUTRITION FOR MENTAL HEALTH

**BY GEORGINA DUNCAN**

What we eat, how we eat and how we absorb and process our food has a huge impact on our mental health. Specific foods and nutrients can help dramatically reduce symptoms and may go a long way in addressing the root cause. This article looks at a few conditions related to our mental health and briefly explains how we can use food as medicine as part of our treatment and prevention.

### **ANXIETY**

Anxiety can be the result of many factors, both physical and psychological. For example, stimulants such as caffeine can be a trigger but so can periods of long term stress, and elevations in blood lactic acid levels (the final product of the breakdown of blood sugar when there is a lack of oxygen).

## BRAIN FOOD - NUTRITION FOR MENTAL HEALTH

CONTINUED...

Caffeine, sugar, alcohol and food allergies can trigger anxiety but so can deficiencies in B vitamins, magnesium and calcium. Eating foods that are rich in these nutrients can help support neurotransmitter synthesis, modulate hormone production and action, and help reduce symptoms of anxiety.

### DEPRESSION

Like anxiety, a number of physical and psychological factors can be found at play in depression. The dominant physiological theory is known as the 'monoamine hypothesis', in which there is an imbalance of the monoamine neurotransmitters such as serotonin, epinephrine and nor-epinephrine. Nutrient deficiencies, drug use (including prescription), alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, hypoglycaemia, hypo or hyperthyroidism and food allergies can all impact on these neurotransmitters.

*A long term deficiency in any nutrient or mineral will have adverse effects, but with a specific focus on the neurotransmitters commonly found in mood disorders, increasing B vitamins (especially B6, B9 and B12) and omega 3 fatty acids is a necessity.*

The brain requires a constant amount of blood sugar to function. Studies have shown hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) to be common in those with depression and anxiety, and simply switching from refined carbohydrates to a whole grain, whole food based diet with suitable amounts of fats and proteins, as well as eating at regular times can significantly improve and stabilise mood. Food allergies are another common, yet often overlooked factor in mental health, and removing triggers can also yield results.

### IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)

IBS is characterised by a combination of the following: abdominal discomfort, altered bowel function, constipation, diarrhoea, hyper-secretion of colonic mucous, excessive flatulence, nausea, loss of appetite and varying degrees of anxiety and depression. Four main causes of IBS are stress, low dietary fibre, food allergies and high intakes of sugar.

What is now commonly referred to as the gut-brain axis is one reason why so many gut-based issues also present with signs and symptoms that relate back to mental health. Addressing the cause of IBS, restoring the gut lining and microflora, replenishing nutrient deficiencies as a result of poor absorption and removing triggers will inadvertently help reduce the co-morbidities of anxiety and depression.



### PRE-MENSTRUAL TENSION (PMS)

Typical symptoms of PMS include acne, low energy levels, tension, irritability, anxiety, depression, mood swings, headaches, low sex drive, insomnia, back pain, cramping and bloating.

A common finding for PMS is that estrogen levels are excessively elevated and progesterone is out of balance accordingly.



## BRAIN FOOD - NUTRITION FOR MENTAL HEALTH

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A predominantly vegetarian based diet with high amounts of fibre rich plant food, has shown to be effective in bringing down estrogen levels; studies have shown that vegetarian women excrete 2-3 times more estrogen in their stools than omnivores. The effect of caffeine is also very significant in women who experience changes their psychology around menses, as it can impact negatively in the brain receptors.

***Foods high in Vitamin B6 help metabolize and excrete estrogen, as do cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, kale (cooked) and sprouted vegetables while magnesium rich foods can help stabilise hormones.***



### A WORD ON ALCOHOL...

Alcohol takes many of these essential nutrients mentioned and uses them in its metabolism and elimination. Keep this in mind when drinking – you need to ensure you are having more than enough nutrients to avoid dipping below the threshold. Never replace food with alcohol, and if you are drinking, or drink regularly, your food needs to be nutrient dense.

### ...AND PESTICIDES

It is estimated that only 2% of pesticides actually serve their purpose, while the other 98% are absorbed into the air, water, soil and food supply – and inevitably, into us. While some pesticides are now banned, it doesn't mean that they are gone. For example, DDT, has been banned for almost 30 years, but because of its long half life, it is still being found in the soil and in root vegetables. Furthermore, the amount of different types of pesticides and fungicides has drastically increased.

***For example, more than 110 different pesticides are used on apples.***

Even if such products are deemed 'safe', the sheer amount that can end up being ingested can cause havoc on the gut microflora, add a heavy burden to the liver and cause mental disturbances through either the gut brain axis, the recycling of toxic metabolites through an over burdened liver, increasing inflammation by damaging cell membranes, or acting on neurotransmitters.

Eating organic foods reduces your exposure to not only pesticides, but also heavy metals such as lead and mercury (whose detrimental effects to the brain have been well established), and solvents which damage immune cells. Furthermore, organic grown foods often have a higher nutrient profile. A review of 34 studies comparing organic to non organic produce, found organic food had a higher protein quality, higher levels of vitamin C, and 5-20% higher minerals such as magnesium, zinc and iron, as well as having higher levels of antioxidants.

## BRAIN FOOD - NUTRITION FOR MENTAL HEALTH

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### NUTRIENT DENSE FOODS:

#### MAGNESIUM

Kelp & other seaweeds, wheat bran & germ, almonds, cashews, buckwheat, brazil nuts, millet, pecans, walnuts, rye, tofu, soybeans, brown rice, collard greens, avocado & cacao.

#### ZINC

Red meat, pulses, chicken, oysters, fish, nuts, seeds (especially pumpkin) and ginger root.

#### B VITAMINS:

B1 – meat, fish, chicken, whole grains, peas, beans, milk

B2 – organ meats, yeast extracts and milk

B3 – meat, fish, poultry, whole-grains

B5 – chicken, beef, potatoes, oats, egg yolks, broccoli, whole-grains, milk, leafy greens, royal jelly

B6 – whole-grains, legumes, eggs, yeast extracts, sunflower seeds, wheat germ, soybeans, walnuts, lentils, buckwheat, black eyed peas, navy beans, brown rice, hazelnut

B9 – Black eyed peas, rice germ, soy flour & beans, wheat germ, wheat bran, kidney beans, mung beans, navy beans, chickpeas, asparagus, lentils, walnuts, spinach

B12 – Oysters, sardines, trout, salmon, tuna, lamb, eggs, beef, edam cheese, swiss cheese, haddock, cheddar cheese, nutritional yeast flakes

#### CALCIUM

Seaweeds, cheddar cheese, leafy greens, almonds, parsley, dandelion greens, brazil nuts, watercress, goats milk, tofu, sunflower seeds, buckwheat, sesame seeds or tahini.

#### ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS

Salmon, mackerel, herring, halibut, oysters, anchovies, flaxseeds (linseeds), ground flaxseed oil, walnuts, chia seeds, soy beans, hemp seeds.



#### Further reading:

- Clinical Naturopathic Medicine, by L. Hechtman
- The Encyclopedia of Healing Foods, by M. Murray & J. Pizzorno
- Clinical Naturopathy 2e; An evidence-based guide to practise, by Jerome Sarris & Jon Wardle



## POWER BREAKFAST BOWL



Breakfast is vital. Full stop. In fact, I think it is THE most important meal of the day, but it could be that that is just because I love my breakfast so much that I would sacrifice all my other meals over it if I had too!

Some people say that they don't feel much hunger in the mornings. If this is the case, it may be due to a long term habit of skipping breakfast, or not taking time to acknowledge the hunger if you are in a rush, but it may also be because of some sort of congestion in the GIT or liver. Generally, when everything's ticking along well, there should be hunger in the mornings.

***Have you ever heard the old saying 'Breakfast like a king, lunch like a merchant and dinner like a pauper?' To increase vitality throughout the day, and allow your body to properly rest and digest over night, I think this is a pretty good tip.***

Breakfast is needed to kick start the metabolism and stimulate digestive processes and give the body and brain the fuel it needs after the overnight fast. Breakfast should contain a mix of carbohydrates, good quality essential fatty acids and proteins in order to stabilise blood sugar levels, and keep you satisfied for at least several hours.

Skipping breakfast altogether results in hypoglycaemia (amongst other things). Symptoms can include fatigue, difficulty getting out of bed, mild headaches, dizziness, poor concentration, or a fervent need for a strong coffee! How we start our day can set up the rest of the day - so begin well, and then you are already off to such a flying start!

These bowls can be made the night before, to save time in the morning, and are easily transportable if made in tupperware.

### **WHY THIS BREAKFAST?**

Because it gives you A LOT of essential minerals and nutrients for energy and hormone production such as zinc, magnesium, calcium, selenium, essential fatty acids, most of the vitamin B's, and antioxidants. It also provides you with plenty of protein from the combination of the nuts, seeds and oats, and fats from the nuts and seeds, as well as fibre from the oats, chia seeds and fruit, so you should last at least a few hours before feeling the urge for a snack.

By Georgina Duncan (BHSc. Naturopathy).

## NUTRITION

### WHAT YOU NEED:

- 1/2 cup organic oats (or cooked quinoa if avoiding gluten).
- 2 tbs chia seeds
- 1/2 tsp raw cacao
- 1 big tsp ground flaxseed (linseed)
- water to mix
- Handful of organic berries, fresh or frozen
- 1/2 piece other seasonal fruit
- 1 tbs raw pumpkin seeds
- 4 brazil nuts, roughly chopped
- 6 walnuts, roughly chopped
- 1 tblsp tahini
- Optional: Coconut yogurt or organic full fat yogurt to serve

### WHAT TO DO:

- Combine oats or quinoa, chia seeds and cacao in a bowl. Add in enough water so that the mix is loose and well combined, kind of like a bircher muesli style consistency.
- Top with the berries and fruit, seeds, nuts & drizzle tahini over the whole lot.
- Dig in!



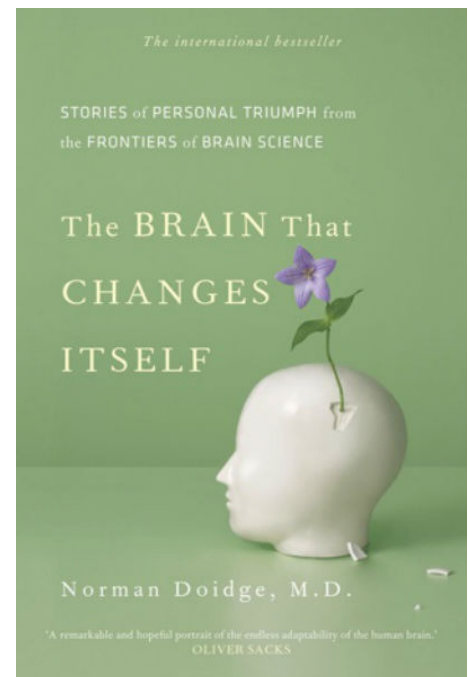
## BOOK REVIEW

### THE BRAIN THAT CHANGES ITSELF

By Dr. Norman Doige

"The brain is a plastic, living organ that can actually change its own structure and function, even into old age.

This book gives details about a woman born with half a brain that rewired itself to work as a whole, a woman labelled retarded who cured her deficits with brain exercises and now cures those of others, blind people learning to see, learning disorders cured, IQs raised, aging brains rejuvenated and many more fascinating stories. Dr. Doidge explores the profound implications of the changing brain for understanding the mysteries of love, sexual attraction, taste, culture and education in an immensely moving, inspiring book that will permanently alter the way we look at human possibility and human nature."



*This book is on all of our reading lists!*

## CLINIC NEWS

### PRE NATAL YOGA , POST NATAL YOGA & ACTIVE BIRTH

Georgie has recently completed her latest yoga training to become a Mindful Birth Yoga Practitioner. The training now enables her to teach pre and post natal yoga classes, as well as individual, couples or group workshops in active birth. The active birth workshops are specifically focusing in on optimising the labour process through massage, movement, and breath techniques.

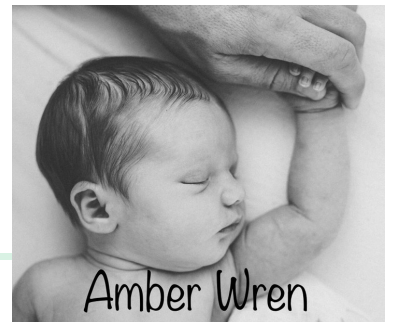


Both pre and post natal yoga courses will be run in 6 week blocks at Swell Yoga Studio, as well as being integrated into individual Naturopathy consultations for preconception and pregnancy care.

Keep an ear and an eye out for the Active Birth workshops that will pop up in the next few months, or contact us for an individual couples workshop.

### MRWC SAYS GOODBYE TO SAM

Sam is making a big move over to Tamworth, so it was a sad goodbye on last Friday. From all of us here at MRWC, we wish him the best of luck. For clients under Sam's care, Dr.Siobhan will be taking over for now.



### CLAY AND MARY WELCOME THEIR DAUGHTER

On Thursday 24th January, Clay, Mary and big brother Orlando welcomed Amber Wren Farley into the world. Everyone is happy, healthy and now back in Exmouth enjoying the hot summer days.



*Naturopathy rebates end in April 2019 - book in before then to make the most of your health cover!*

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