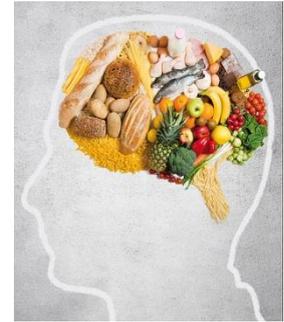


Health Matters – My Lifestyle

The role of diet in the nation's mental health has yet to be fully understood and embraced, but the research is now building about the direct association between what people eat and drink and how they feel, think and behave¹.

The emerging evidence is that good quality nutrition may play a role in contributing to the prevention of mental health problems and in the management and recovery from these if they do occur.

The information below, gathered from various sources is not a diet program but rather a compilation of articles, news and research that may be helpful in getting you to think about your eating patterns and current lifestyle so you can start to protect and improve your physical health and emotional wellbeing.

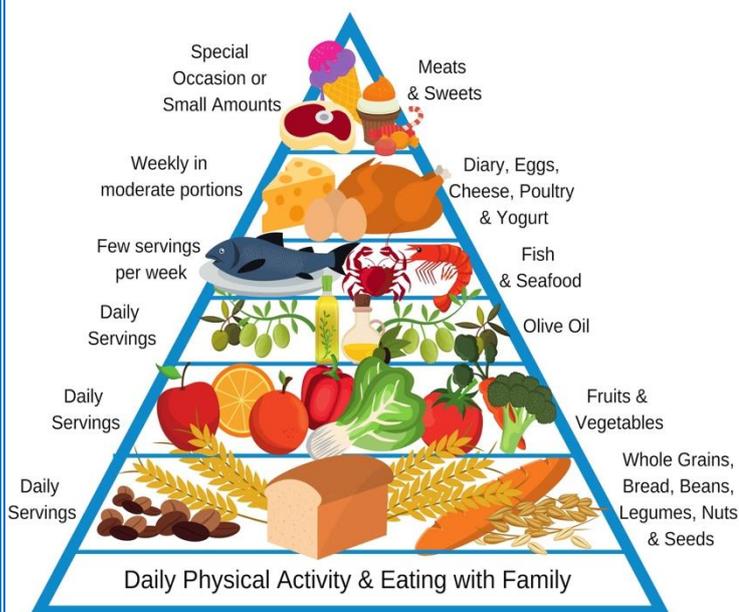


Health warning!

Please let me make it clear I am not a dietician or nutritionist (believe me being a therapist is enough for me) so the information in this CareMail is intended only as a taster, an introduction to what a small number of studies and research have shown can improve our diet and physical and mental health.

Everyone has their own dietary health needs and no particular food is a magic bullet, in addition food is not a substitute for medical treatment, so please always check with your Doctor or nutritionist before making any changes to your diet especially if you are not feeling well or taking medications.

A Mediterranean Diet



The Mediterranean diet is based on the diets of people from Crete, Greece, and Southern Italy.

This Mediterranean diet (oops let's call it Mediterranean way of life) which includes eating lots of vegetables, beans, oily fish, fruit, nuts and of course olive oil has been shown to have huge benefits for our heart, brain, immune system and sleep. This is because the foods that make up the Mediterranean diet are known to be high in antioxidants, DNA repairing and inflammatory activity². In summary, Individuals who follow this type of diet show lower rates of heart disease, chronic disease, and obesity.

Furthermore, studies also show that this type of diet can have a huge impact on our **mood** and help lift **depressive symptoms**³

¹ Mental Health Foundation - Mental health and nutrition briefing

² Dr William Li - Eat to Beat Disease.

³ Smiles Trial – Food & Mood Centre at Deakin University, Australia

Here is a paragraph from **Harvard Health** publishing in February 2018:

“A dietary pattern characterized by a high intake of fruit, vegetables, whole grain, fish, olive oil, low-fat dairy and antioxidants and low intakes of animal foods was apparently associated with a decreased risk of depression. A dietary pattern characterized by a high consumption of red and/or processed meat, refined grains, sweets, high-fat dairy products, butter, potatoes and high-fat gravy, and low intakes of fruits and vegetables is associated with an increased risk of depression⁴.”

In addition, a randomized controlled trial published in the journal **PLOS ONE** finds that symptoms of depression dropped significantly among a group of young adults after they followed a Mediterranean-style pattern of eating for three weeks. Participants saw their depression "score" fall and they reported lower levels of anxiety and stress too.

Alternatively, the depression scores among the control group of participants — who didn't change their diets — didn't budge.

These participants continued to eat a diet higher in refined carbohydrates, processed foods and sugary foods and beverages. Their depression scores remained in the "moderate severity" range.



Your Immune System

The immune system is a network of cells, tissues, and organs that work together to protect the body from infection. A healthy and active immune system is critical to good physical and mental health and helps fight off the virus, but as we get older our immune response, your body's defence system, gets weaker and less effective⁵. Unfortunately, there is no getting away from the fact that being significantly overweight can lead to chronic inflammation in the body which in turn makes the immune system less effective. Eating anti-inflammatory foods can help lessen this inflammatory state and will also lessen the chances that plaque-clogging blood vessels will rupture to cause a heart attack or stroke⁶.

Immune Boosting Foods



The following are just a sample:

Aged garlic, blackberries and blueberries, broccoli sprouts, chestnuts, cranberry juice, olive oil, walnuts, white button mushrooms, oyster mushrooms, pomegranate and chilli peppers.

As we know taking exercise can also boost our immune system, and 20 minutes of brisk walking everyday has also been shown to help reduce chronic inflammation⁷

⁴ Harvard Health Publishing

⁵ WebMD - How Aging Affects Your Immune System

⁶ Dr William Li - Eat to Beat Disease.

⁷ University of San Diego School of Medicine

Gut Health

Maintaining a healthy gut contributes to better overall health and immune function. Gut health refers to the balance of microorganisms that live in the digestive tract. Looking after the health of the gut and maintaining the right balance of these microorganisms is vital for physical and mental health, immunity, and more.⁸

These bacteria, yeasts, and viruses — of which there are trillions — are also called the “gut microbiome” or “gut flora”.

Some of the ways to improve the gut microbiome and enhance overall health are well known, stop smoking, get enough sleep, don't take anti biotics unnecessarily and reduce stress. But did you know that just as antibiotics can disrupt the gut microbiota, so too can disinfectant cleaning products, according to the results of one study. The 2018 research analysed the gut flora of over 700 infants ages 3–4 months and the researchers found that those who lived in homes where people used disinfectant cleaning products at least weekly were twice as likely to have higher levels of Lachnospiraceae gut microbes, a type associated with type 2 diabetes and obesity. So, if you have to use cleaning products open the windows and ensure lots of fresh air is circulating throughout the room.

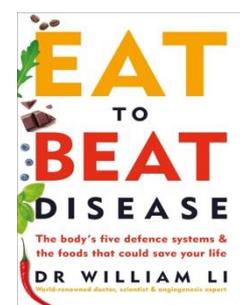
One way to help our microbiome is to actually eat bacteria. Consuming the following foods regularly may improve gut health:



Other foods with a beneficial effect on your microbiome are pumpernickel bread, kiwi fruit, bamboo shoots, dark chocolate, walnuts, beans and mushrooms.

The guiding principles for taking care of your gut follow 4 basic rules of thumb: eat lots of dietary fibre from whole food, eat less animal protein, less processed foods and more fresh whole foods.

A lot of the information in this CareMail comes from the book Eat to Beat Disease, a comprehensive book written by Dr William Li, the co-founder of Angiogenesis Foundation which has pioneered a new field of medicine for fighting disease. There are many other studies which also back up his research.



⁸ Medical News Today May 2019

And if you are trying to lose weight

Recent findings from the University of Oxford published in the British Journal of Health Psychology (June 2020) outlined 53 actions that were found to be effective if you are trying to lose weight. Listed here are the 10 that I found most interesting and /or easy to follow. Of course, none are really rocket science and some are pretty obvious, but maybe adopting just one will help you get back on track if you have lost your mojo.

And even if you can only follow one it's good news because the people in the study who weighed themselves daily and followed just one of the actions had lost half a stone (3.2kg) more than the group who had just weighed themselves daily. It's about taking control (yes that word is good in this context!) so you gain dietary independence and confidence.



1. Replace rice, potatoes and pasta (all of which raise your blood sugar) with vegetables.
2. Make half your main meal veg or salad. Steamed veg can be enhanced by low calorie dressings made from yoghurt, lemon juice or balsamic vinegar, all of which are low in calories.
3. Ditch starters and desserts at lunch and dinner.
4. At breakfast consume only one type of food, for example, eggs, toast or porridge.
5. Eat nothing after 8pm, people are more prone to impulsive eating during the evening, and that usually means higher calorie foods like crisps and alcohol.
6. Skip one meal a day a few times a week, this will help your body cut some of its usual calories and start to use its fat reserves for energy instead.
7. Drink a pint of water before a meal. Several studies show (including one in the Clinical Nutrition Research Journal) that drinking water before a meal results in fewer calories being consumed.
8. Stop before you are feeling full, this can take practice, but it is possible to pre-empt satiety and use a smaller plate for a smaller serving size.
9. Fast once or twice a week. A fasting day on which you consume less than 800 calories cuts out about half of the daily calories you usually take in. Your body will have to source 50-75 percent of the energy you need from fat reserves. NB - make sure you stay well hydrated on your fasting days and check with your Doctor before doing this one!.
10. Eat 6-8 nuts a day; being high in protein and fibre they will fill you up, but allow yourself only a handful a day. Far better than a bag of crisps or unhealthy snack - and yes I do know unhealthy snacks often taste soooo much better!!!

Yes, it's a tough one No. 8 - stop eating before you are full AND a smaller size plate (seriously) but come on keep going you are nearly at No. 10 ...

All 53 steps can be found in the following article:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/53-steps-to-help-lose-weight-from-ditching-the-pasta-to-standing-while-you-watch-tv-0jdkzq3h0>

Silver Lining

This is an extract from an article by Amy Williams which appeared in Town & Country in May, the full article can be found at <https://www.townandcountrymag.com/uk/lifestyle/a32668268/unexpected-benefits-of-lockdown/>

Clear waters in Venice, blue skies in Delhi and wild animals boldly wandering through quiet cities – limits on travel have been benefiting the Earth, with carbon emissions expected to be down by a record-breaking eight per cent. If that sounds underwhelming, that's a loss of two to three billion tonnes of global-warming gas.

We watched in awe as herds of goats and sheep curiously took to the streets, and now the National Trust is reporting that the UK's wildlife is thriving. Rare species have also been spotted expanding their territories, free from the disturbance of humans.

The National Trust's head of nature conservation Ben McCarthy said: "With less traffic and fewer people, we've heard deafening levels of birdsong and seen famous monuments and formal gardens colonised by wildlife."

As lockdown gradually lifts, the organisation is asking that we play our part in ensuring wildlife remains undisturbed by keeping dogs on short leads, taking rubbish home and not approaching animals.

Shared Space

The Brain's Warrior Way – Dr. Daniel Amen

An amazing and engaging talk from Psychiatrist, Professor and best-selling author Dr Amen who the Washington Post call "the most popular Psychiatrist in America"

This talk will change the way you think about and protect your brain, and show you how you can make it healthier. I think this is one of the most fascinating talks I have ever heard.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXLwPSIDaAo>



Quotes of The Month

I have just discovered the work of Mary Anne Radmacher and love her quotes. This is one of my favourites.

"Courage does not always roar, sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I will try again tomorrow" - Mary Anne Radmacher

But I like this one as well, so this month you get two for the price of one (you can thank me later)

"All growth starts at the end of your comfort zone." - Tony Robbins

Take care and we shall meet again next month.