

SUMMARY

QUICK TIPS FOR OPTIMAL MENTAL HEALTH

NUTRITION FOR OPTIMAL MENTAL HEALTH:

- Establish a regular pattern of eating and stick to it. The right mix of food is crucial, as is the right mix of tastes and textures to make the meal palatable and enjoyable.
- Eat a good protein source such as fish, lean meat, chicken, peanut butter, tofu, or beans at least twice a day to increase alertness and mental energy. 15–20% of calories should be protein.
- Eat a good source of carbohydrates such as bread, pasta, rice, crackers, cereal, or potatoes at most meals and snacks to maximize serotonin production and prevent depression. But, you can eat too many carbohydrates. Limit carbohydrates to 50–55% of calories.
- Prepare foods with healthful fats and oils such as olive oil, canola oil, and peanut oil to enhance palatability and release endorphins for enhancing mood. Eat fish that is high in fat to provide omega-3 fatty acids for optimal brain function. About 30% of calories should be fat.
- Eat 5–6 servings of fruits and vegetables each day to provide antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, fibers, and palatability.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR OPTIMAL MENTAL HEALTH:

- Do some form of exercise or physical activity at least 3 times per week.
- Choose a physical activity that you enjoy! The most important factor is that you feel good after doing it.
- Start slowly and build your endurance.
- Higher intensity, endurance exercise is most likely to stimulate a release of endorphins which can enhance mood.

RELAXATION FOR OPTIMAL MENTAL HEALTH:

- Meditate or do guided imagery to trigger the relaxation response. Guided imagery is especially useful when feeling stressed, anxious, or tense.
- Listen to calming music to increase relaxation, mental clarity, and vigor.
- Rub aromatic oils into your skin or put in warm baths.
- Get or give a massage.
- Go see a funny movie, tell a few jokes, laugh at your mistakes.