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Articles:

Diet, Nutrition, and
Substance Use Disorder



Substance Use Recovery
and Diet



Nutrition to Help Your Body
Heal in Addiction Recovery



Substance Misuse Prevention Newsletter: A Collection of Readings

Substance Misuse, Nutrition, and Mental Health



<https://www.hcbh.org/media/rdynpnx4/nutrition.png>

Brief Overview

Nutritional psychiatry explores how our diet can affect our mental health (McGrane, 2021). Although more research is needed to prove the cause and effect of mental illness and diet, it is highly likely that our diet supports brain health. Substance misuse can greatly deplete our bodies of essential nutrients, thus impacting how our brain functions. Based on prior research, there is a strong belief that some foods can boost mood due to an interaction with neurotransmitters or brain protecting factors (Imhoff, 2019). For example, studies have found a potential link between a well-balanced diet and a decreased risk of depression in adolescents (McGrane, 2021).

Tips for Maintaining a Healthy Diet

- Meal plan
- Include a variety of fruits and vegetables
- Choose water over drinks with sugar
- Limit alcohol consumption- often filled with calories and sugar
- Limit marijuana use to avoid an increase in cravings



Substance Misuse and Nutrient Deficiencies

Heavy use of alcohol and marijuana can contribute to nutrient deficiencies. Heavy alcohol use can result in poor nutrition due to the fact that individuals may limit their food intake as a result of drinking all of their calories (Gans, 2021). Additionally, alcohol can cause gastrointestinal inflammation and ulcers, which may inhibit digestion and absorption of nutrients (Gans, 2021). Due to this lack of absorption, vitamin B1 deficiencies can result which may cause issues with memory and learning (Gans, 2021).

Marijuana can stimulate our appetite, making it difficult for individuals who regularly use marijuana to maintain a healthy diet. An increased consumption of foods that do not meet nutritional needs can result.

Recovery and Nutrition

Below are some common nutritional concerns among individuals with substance use disorders and recommendations for each concern (Savoie-Roskos et al., 2023):

Nutritional Concern:	Recommendation:
Loss of appetite due to increased levels of dopamine.	Slowly introduce healthy snacks and whole food options on a regular basis.
Nutritional deficiencies due to lack of consumption and/or absorption.	Make sure meals contain foods from all five food groups in order to get a wide variety of macro- and micro-nutrients.
Dehydration due to withdrawals or consumption of large amounts of caffeine.	Measure water and fluid intake, introduce electrolyte supplements, oral hydration solutions, and limit caffeine intake.
Poor oral health due to infections or a reduction in saliva from substance use.	Maintain hydration, practice proper oral hygiene, and introduce healthy foods in softened form.

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