



## NUTRITION FOR WELLBEING

Over the past few years, there has been increasing research and conversations around the role of nutrition in mental health and wellbeing. Particularly, how supporting our gut microbiome and eating a Mediterranean diet \* provides the most nourishing support for not only our physical health, but also our mental health and wellbeing. ***\*Please note 'diet' refers to a selection of food groups rather a weight loss programme.***

As part of our holistic support to wellbeing, we have created this resource as a way to share some of this knowledge and understanding.

### The Gut-Brain Connection!

Research shows that our gut health can impact our mental health and potentially vice versa too. All research leans towards a Mediterranean diet as the best way to support a healthy gut-brain connection and therefore our mental health and wellbeing. ***If you would like to learn more about the science behind this - please see the last page of this document for additional reading and resources.***

### Supporting our Neurotransmitters through Vitamins and Minerals

Vitamin and minerals are essential for the creation of "happy hormones" such a serotonin and dopamine, which play a vital role in regulating our mood, motivation, cognitive function, sleep and other bodily functions. So it is important we provide our body with the nutrient's it needs for this.

### Giving our brains the fuel it needs to function and thrive!

Over the years, there have been a lot of diets which actually limit the nutrients available to our brains and bodies. *An example of this is the low-fat diet, as fat is essential for the functioning of our brains. So things like olive oil, avocado, nuts, Greek yogurt etc, should be staples in our diet.*

*Essential fatty acids and Omega 3 have been found to help both prevent and also reduce the impact of depression, anxiety, diabetes, dementia...*

***It's important to remember that we eat to fuel our bodies and brains!***

***This is especially relevant in adolescence, which is a hugely demanding time of growth on the body. We need to help ensure young people have the fuel to support themselves through this.***



### 1) Mediterranean Diet

All the research so far has found that the Mediterranean Diet is best for providing the variety of nutrients we need to support our physical and mental health and overall wellbeing. A typical plate would include: vegetables, whole grains, protein and healthy fats such as olive oil or avocado.

This diet is very low in ultra-processed foods and processed sugar.

### 2) Plant Variety is Key

Try to eat **30 different plants a week**. This includes vegetables, fruits, herbs, spices, peas, beans, lentils, seeds and nuts.

### 3) Incorporate Fermented/Probiotic Foods into your diet.

Fermented and probiotic foods are an excellent way to support your gut microbiome. These include: kefir, yogurt, apple cider vinegar, kombucha, pickled vegetables.

### 4) Supplement with Vitamin D and Omega 3

Both have been found to be very helpful in supporting mental health and wellbeing. If possible, it's helpful to supplement your diet with both of these every day, through a simple vitamin tablet/spray.

**As with any supplements, please check with you GP first, as individual circumstances may impact this.**

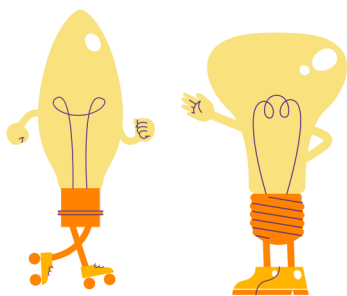
### 5) Get enough Fibre everyday

Great sources of fibre include: wholemeal or granary bread, porridge oats, potatoes with the skin on, grains, peas, beans, lentils, nuts and peas.

You will get enough a day by including portions of these in your daily diet, alongside your portions of vegetables.

### 6) Prioritise whole foods and limit intake of UPFs

This can be tricky as UPFs (ultra-processed foods) have found their way into everyday life! Unfortunately, this means a lot of people are overeating in terms of calories, but under-eating significantly in terms of nutrients. Where possible, prioritise whole, real foods!



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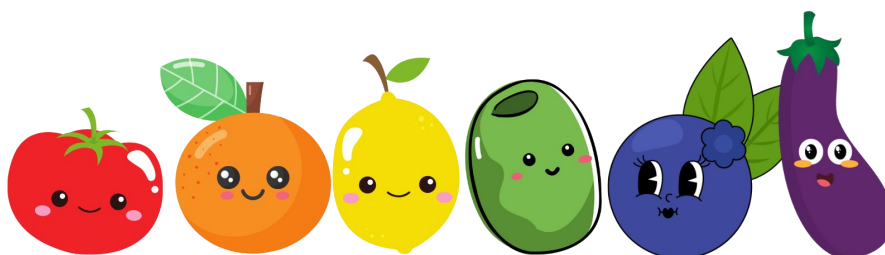
### FINDING AN AFFORDABLE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

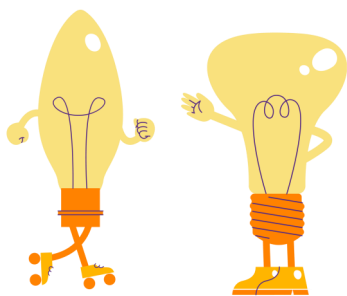
Of course, it is important to note that eating fresh, whole foods and following a Mediterranean diet can be really difficult in terms of cost.

Here are a few tips of how to try and make eating this way more affordable:

- ◆ Buy canned legumes, vegetables, fish etc.
- ◆ Buy frozen fruits or vegetables.
- ◆ Build meals around wholegrains - this can help meals go a long way.  
*For example - whole grain pasta, canned vegetables / leafy greens, canned tomatoes, herb and spices and a little olive oil would make a great Mediterranean dish!*
- ◆ “Buy the best you can afford” - no need to buy organic!
- ◆ Buy in season.
- ◆ Buy dried beans and pulses and use a cooking appliance such as a pressure cooker or slow cooker. Apart from the potential initial cost of an appliance, dried foods are usually much cheaper than tinned or fresh.
- ◆ And if your GP has approved the use of supplements - buying in bulk or on a monthly subscription can make these more cost-effective. Also, if having supplements everyday is a stretch - even having these once or twice a week will still be beneficial.

***If you are starting out, or your child has sensory needs around food, or if it is too expensive to eat this way for every meal, begin by just focusing on Mediterranean foods your family already enjoys and build from there.***





## NUTRITION FOR WELLBEING FURTHER INFORMATION

There has been a longstanding understanding of the connection between our guts and our emotions - think of the phrase "trust your gut". However, it is perhaps only in recent years that the connection between nutrition and mental health and wellbeing has begun to be spoken about in the wider public sphere.

If you are interested in learning more about the fascinating gut-brain connection, here are also some video links which explain this further:

[An Intro to the Gut-Brain Connection - YouTube](#)

[The Gut and Brain: A Surprising Connection \(youtube.com\)](#)

[How Your Gut Bacteria Controls Your Mood \(youtube.com\)](#)

If you find this resource helpful and are interested to read / hear more about this topic, here are a few key people working in the area who may be worth exploring (through books, podcasts, social media etc):

•[Tim Spector](#)

•[Kimberly Wilson](#)

•[Chris Van Tulleken and Xand Van Tulleken](#)

Finally, there have also been a few shows based around this topic recently, which may be worth a watch:

[Watch Hack Your Health: The Secrets of Your Gut | Netflix Official Site](#)

[Watch You Are What You Eat: A Twin Experiment | Netflix Official Site](#)

[Watch Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones | Netflix Official Site](#)