Beyond Dopamine:

Embracing a New Paradigm for Understanding and Addressing the Biochemistry of Addiction and Recovery
Within Everyone's Reach!

ACADEMY FOR ADDICTION & MENTAL HEALTH NUTRITION

Introduction

I am here because too many people have died!

- **In 2021, 106,699 people died of overdose.**
- **These numbers keep increasing!**
- **Some stats indicate a 50% relapse rate and we are frequently informed that addiction is a chronically relapsing disorder.** Determinants and prevalence of relapse among patients with substance use disorders: case of Icyizere Psychotherapeutic Centre - PMC (nih.gov) NCDAS: Substance Abuse and Addiction Statistics [2023] (drugabusestatistics.org)
- **Dr. David Best, a recovery researcher from Leeds College, UK, has found that it can take up to 18 years to achieve post 5 year abstinence.**

WHY???

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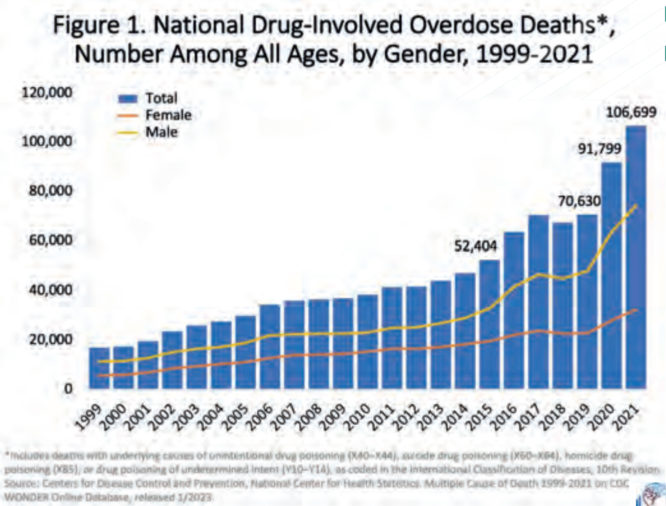
2023 Statistics: 107,543



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Introduction

We have all been taught that addiction is a ***bio-psycho/social-spiritual disorder***. However, as addiction counselors and psychotherapists, we have also been taught that if we think that a client's symptoms are due to disordered brain chemistry, our **ONLY** option is to refer them to a psychiatrist for medication. It is presented as very black and white, with no gray area. *Medication* is offered as the *ONLY TRUE BIOCHEMICAL OPTION!*

Wouldn't it be tragic if that were really true?
*If there was absolutely **nothing** we could do to support the well-being of our brains ourselves, without the help of prescription medication, or street drugs, for that matter?*

It turns out that there is a lot of research supporting a ***huge gray area***, in which we as individuals and clinicians have a lot of power to effect positive change in our own brains, and those of our clients, without medication. This positive change in brain chemistry reflects in improved emotional and behavioral well-being. And it's often right at our finger-tips!

•In this presentation, we will review many of the evidence-based factors which throw the brain off balance, and explore simple nutritional and lifestyle solutions, which can start creating positive change ***within 20 minutes*****!**

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Thesis

- Our thesis is that there are many biochemical and nutritional root causes to emotional and behavioral challenges,
- which can actually be identified and successfully addressed, usually without the need for psychotropic medication…..
- *…..if we are asking the right questions.*
- And to do that, we need a NEW PARADIGM!

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Why Do We Need a New Paradigm?

The Medication–Only Approach Is Limited

- Treatment failure is common in traditional psychiatry and addiction treatment
- Medical/prescription services are not available to everyone, due to high cost and inaccessibility
- Many medications have severe side effects and fatalities
- People are sometimes tied to medication for the rest of their lives
- Health solutions are in the hand of medical professionals rather than the patient or the family
- Promotes stigma and misunderstanding
- Promotes a fatalistic attitude, which disempowers, discourages, and creates an "illness identity"

Basic root causes are not identified or addressed
TOO MANY PEOPLE HAVE DIED!!!

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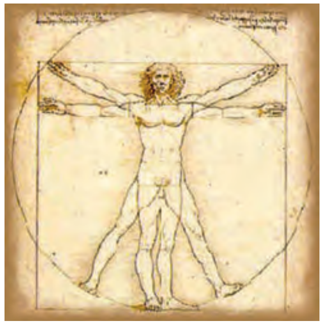
The New Paradigm - *Is More Comprehensive!*

- Believes that root causes exist, can be identified, and effectively treated, often by using diet, nutrients and other non-pharmaceutical means.
- Believes that the brain imbalances which drive addiction are multi-causal and therefore rebalancing them requires a multi-factorial approach.
- Believes that the body is an interconnected whole and doesn't separate the brain from the rest of the body.
- Therefore, may look for biochemical drivers outside of the brain, such as in the digestive system, or the hormonal systems.
- Believes that for the brain to work optimally, it must be fed optimally!



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The New Paradigm - *Is Client-Centered*

- Values the entire person,(body, mind and soul), in their entire life context
- Puts power for change and mental health back into the hands of the patient and family
- Less reliance on medical providers, who may not be easily available, affordable or accessible

Can begin to be implemented
at the very next meal!

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The New Paradigm -
Is EVIDENCE-BASED!

We have research supporting this approach, going back to the beginning of the 20th century, which has been ignored, or simply never read.

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The New Paradigm Pioneers

Bill was a seer with a vision…**most of AA thought vitamin therapy was none of his business, nor theirs. Bill W. knew that it was his business* ***to help all alcoholics and other addicts not only to be free of their addiction but to be comfortable with their new state of well-being and freedom.

https://aminoacidtherapy.com/the-forgotten-chapter-in-bill-w-s-struggle-with-addiction

Bill W

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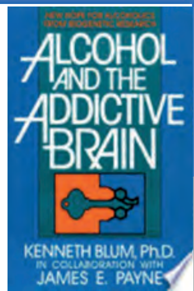
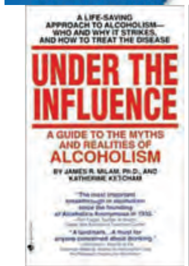
The New Paradigm Pioneers

- Carl Pfeiffer, MD: Mental and Elemental Nutrients, 1975
- Ann Mueller, MD: Eat Right to Live Sober, 1983
- James Milam, MD: Under the Influence, 1984
- Kenneth Blum, PhD: Alcohol and the Addicted Brain, 1991
- Joan Mathews Larson: Seven Weeks to Sobriety, 1993
- Abram Hoffer, MD: The Vitamin Cure for Alcoholism, 2009
- Charles Gant, MD: End Your Addiction Now, 2009





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One Condition:
Many Imbalances

Mood Disorders/ Addiction

↑

Hormones
Gut Dysbiosis & Digestive Insufficiency
Genetics & Epigenetics
Diet & Exercise
Inflammation

One Imbalance:
Many Conditions

Inflammation

↓

Addiction & Mood Disorders
Mental Illness
Arthritis
Cancer
Diabetes
Heart Disease

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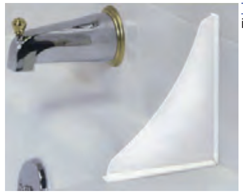
Central Nervous System Disorders

- ADDICTION
- Major Depression
- Schizophrenia
- Bi-Polar Disorder
- Anxiety Disorder/OCD
- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Violence
- Dementia
- Chronic Pain

Causes and Influencers



Neurotransmitter Deficiency:

- All of our feelings, behaviors and ability to respond to stress are mediated by chemical families called *neurotransmitters*.
- If our neurotransmitters are in balance and functioning properly, so, probably, are we.
- Depleted neurotransmitters lead to symptoms such as depression, apathy, anxiety, insomnia, and cravings.
- Substance use, chronic stress, pain, illness, genetics, and poor nutrition can deplete our NTs.
    - It is our brain's job to allow us to cope with stress gracefully!
        - To do that, it must be fed optimally!

Causes and Influencers

Nutrient Deficiencies:

- The brain REQUIRES certain nutrients to function optimally
- Research-wise, we have known for years what nutrients the brain needs to function optimally, and which psychiatric symptoms result from these deficiencies
- This can be addressed using diet and supplements *Mark's Treatment Failure Story*

Causes and Influencers

Hormone Dysregulation:

- Katherine Dalton, an endocrinologist from London started publishing in 1970 about the mental health & behavioral dysregulation that often occurs to menstruating women during the luteal phase of the cycle.
- In recovering women, this translates into higher relapse potential during the luteal phase
- This can be addressed using diet and supplements, as well as bio-identical hormonal support for the more serious PMDD *Cyclical Relapse Story*
- Low testosterone can also predispose men to SUDs - *Cocaine Addiction Story*
- Dietary changes, supplements and herbs can support testosterone production

Causes and Influencers

Hypoglycemia:

- Research from 1966 indicates that severe psychiatric sx can result from low or dropping blood sugar
- Research as far back as 1966 show that possibly 95 % of people with AUD and SUD in general have reactive hypoglycemia.
- This has tremendous implications for relapse potential - *Wayne Dyer Lecture story*
- This can be addressed using diet and supplements

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Causes and Influencers

Gut Dysbiosis

- Recent research is correlating mood disturbances with the presence or absence of specific bacteria in the gut.
- Some articles correlate a predisposition to various addictive and eating disorders, as well as schizophrenia, with dysbiosis
- AUD study
- Gut health can be improved by eating fiber-rich and fermented foods, and decreasing Ultra Highly Processed (UHP) foods

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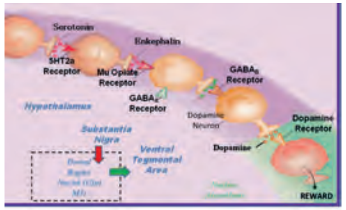
Causes and Influencers



Genetics

- Reward Deficiency Syndrome
- Pyroluria
- MTHFR
- Various other genes impacting addiction & MH
- *These can all be effectively addressed using food and supplements*

Epigenetics, Nutrigenomics & Precision Medicine

- How lifestyle, including nutrition, sleep and exercise can modify genetic expression to bring about desired change.

Genes are NOT Destiny!!!

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Causes and Influencers

Food Intolerances

- Subset of AUD won't stop drinking while still eating gluten – Gluten Story
- Gluten and Casein Intolerance has been associated with major mental illnesses such as Bi-polar and schizophrenia
- A gluten-free/ casein-free diet can effect positive change within 5 days!

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Causes and Influencers

Inflammation

- Research is showing that inflammation can CAUSE depression as well as increasing chronic pain
- Can be decreased through diet and supplements

Toxic Reactions

- Pesticides, heavy metals, and food additives can CAUSE psychiatric symptoms
- They can overload the liver's ability to detoxify, leading to symptoms of toxic overload
- Can be decreased through diet and environmental choices along with specific supplements

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An *In-Balance Life*

Requires an *In-Balance Brain*

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Master Control Panel

Feelings
Skills
Willpower
Behaviours
Cognitions
Perceptions

Mood
Sleep
Choice
Relaxation
Motivation
Energy

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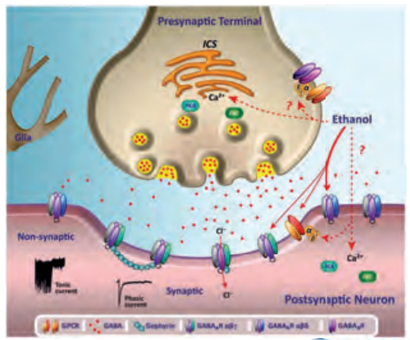
The Brain is a Chemical Factory

where everything is built from the ground up, from scratch!
It requires a wide variety of raw materials for anything to happen!!!



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Food is *Not* Optional!

The Brain Requires Certain Nutrients to Function!

- **Adequate Protein**
  - To provide amino acid precursors of NTs
- **Specific Vitamins and Minerals**
  - To act as enzymes and co-factors
- **Essential Fatty Acids**
  - For optimal transmission of NTs
- **Water**
  - The Brain is made up of 75% water

Why Protein?

Source of our all-important mood mediating neurotransmitter systems

- **All of our feelings, behaviors and ability to respond to stress are mediated by chemical families called *neurotransmitters*.**
- **If our neurotransmitters are in balance and functioning properly, so, probably, are we.**
- **Depleted neurotransmitters lead to symptoms such as depression, apathy, anxiety and insomnia.**
  - **It is our brain's job to allow us to cope with stress gracefully!**
    - **To do that, it must be fed optimally!**

Why Protein?

Four Mood - Regulating Neurotransmitter Systems

Catecholamines: Dopamine, Norepinephrine, Epinephrine/Adrenaline

- **Energy, drive, enthusiasm, reward**
- **L-Phenylalanine, L-Tyrosine, co-factors**

Low Catecholamines: Apathetic depression, boredom, poor focus, fatigue

Cravings for:

- **Stimulants: Cocaine, Meth, Caffeine, ...**
- **Thrills, danger, "adrenaline junkie"**
- **Sugar/starches, tobacco, opioids, alcohol, THC**

Why Protein?

Four Mood - Regulating Neurotransmitter Systems

Serotonin → Melatonin

- **Self-esteem, Humor, Flexibility, Mellowness, Sleep**
- **L-Tryptophan, 5 HTP, co-factors**

Low Serotonin:

- **Obsessive worry, insomnia, social anxiety, perfectionism, irritability, PMS, holding grudges**
- **Cravings for: Sugar/starches, Ecstasy, alcohol, THC, nicotine, SSRI's**

Low Melatonin:

- **Lack of sleepiness at bedtime - body doesn't know it is time to sleep.**

Why Protein?

Four Mood - Regulating Neurotransmitter Systems

GABA:

- Muscle relaxation, Sleep, Ability to cope with stress & filter out distractions
- GABA, Taurine, Inositol, Theanine, Glutamine, Magnesium, co-factors

Low GABA

- Muscle tension, Insomnia/Restless Sleep, Overwhelm, Seizure disorders, Anxiety/Panic, Highly Sensitive
- Cravings for: Alcohol, THC, Sugar/starches, Nicotine, Benzodiazapines (Xanax, Valium, Atavan)

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Why Protein?

Four Mood - Regulating Neurotransmitter Systems

Endorphins:

- Emotional and Physical Pain Control, Bonding, Comfort, Love...
- Cleaved off POMC which is made from many amino acids
- D-Phenylalanine/DLPA, co-factors, high protein diet

Low Endorphins:

- Chronic physical/emotional pain, Loneliness, Grief
- Cravings for: Opioids, sugar/starch, alcohol, THC, nicotine

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The Power of Amino Acid Therapy

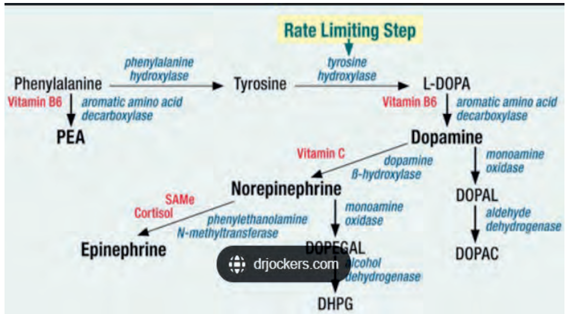
- Amino Acids are molecules which form the building blocks of the human body
- Essential Amino Acids are found in food, and clump together to form protein
- When protein is digested, it is broken back down into its component amino acids
- These amino acids are absorbed into the bloodstream and go everywhere in the body accomplishing many diverse tasks.
- Specific amino acids cross the blood brain barrier and create neurotransmitters in the presence of specific co-factor vitamins and minerals
- Research shows that ingested amino acids cross the blood brain barrier and create new neurotransmitters in as little as 1-20 minutes depending upon delivery methods!
- Thus, they can improve mood, help sleep or turn off a craving within 20 minutes
- Good quality, free-form amino acids can be found in any vitamin store or on-line.

Amino Acids are Anti-Addictive!

Over time you can use less and less to get the same effect, rather than more and more, because they are rebuilding NT systems, rather than depleting them.

Why Vitamins & Minerals and Which Ones?

- HOWEVER, to make NTs, we need more than just amino acids!
- A wide variety of vitamins and minerals are REQUIRED to turn amino acids into NTS
- Vit C, all the B's, Iron, Magnesium, Zinc, etc. If even one is missing, the entire factory may grind to a halt!
- We HAVE to get these from food.



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Symptoms of B Vitamin Deficiency

➔**B1 – Thiamine:** Mental confusion, depression, fatigue, apathy, anxiety, inability to concentrate or tolerate pain. (Beriberi & Warnecke Korsakoff Syndrome)

➔**B2 – Riboflavin:** Brain & nervous system changes. Mental sluggishness, depression, migraines.

➔**B3 – Niacin:** Fear, depression, suspicion, insomnia, weakness, irritability, mental confusion. (Pellegra).

➔**B5 – Pantothenic Acid:** Fatigue, disturbed sleep, depression, adrenal exhaustion, irritability.

➔**B6 – Pyridoxine:** Mental confusion, depression, anxiety, insomnia, lack of hydrochloric acid, glucose intolerance, lack of dream recall.

➔**B9 - Folate/Folic Acid:** Depression, anxiety, fatigue, apathy, poor memory, irritability, anemia

➔**B12 – Cobalamin:** Apathy, paranoia & poor memory/concentration, fatigue.

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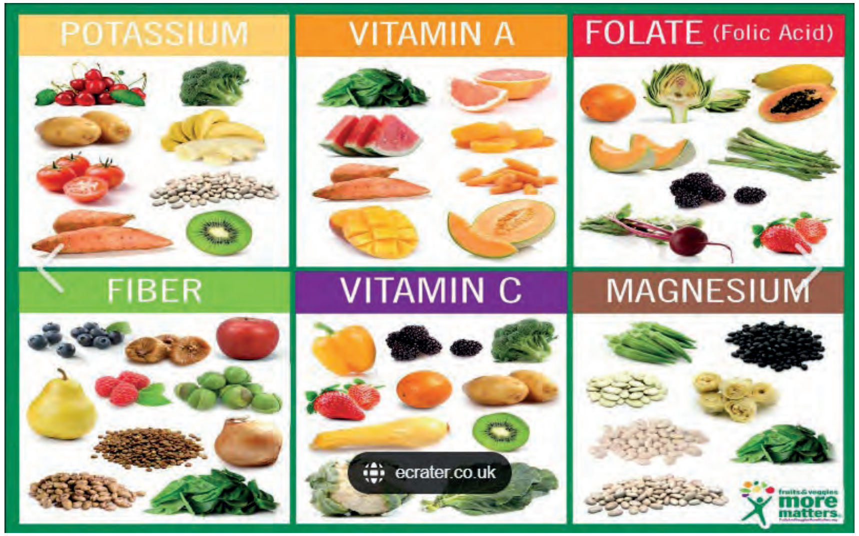
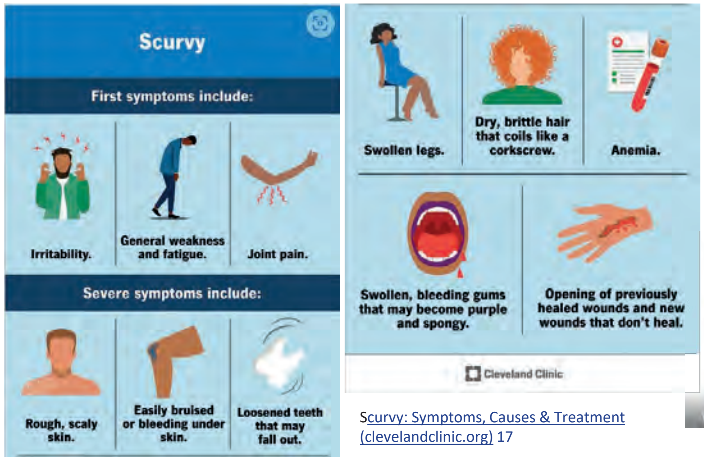


Scurvy???

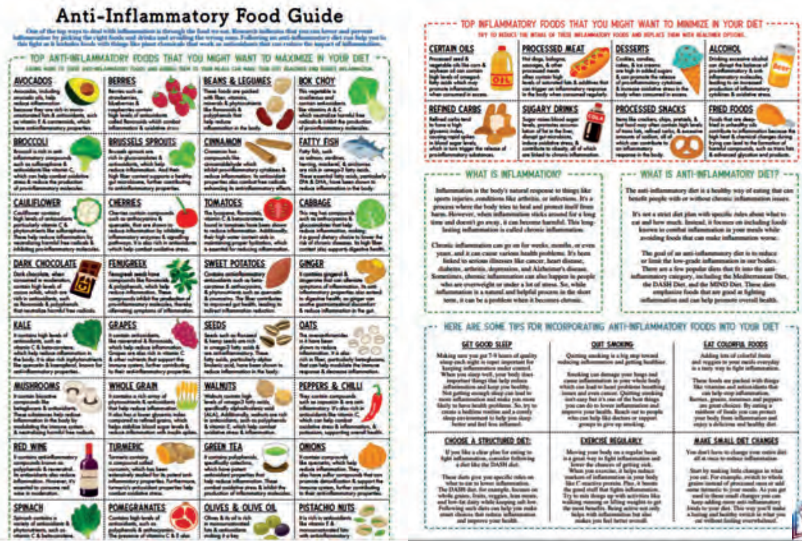


Scurvy: Symptoms, Causes & Treatment (clevelandclinic.org) 17

Causes

- Insufficient intake of vitamin C or ascorbic acid which may arise as a result of long-term drug and alcohol use, leading to:
  - Profound oxidative stress
  - Profound malnutrition from simply not eating real food

Vitamin C



West Virginia Action Guide on Fruits and Vegetables

CDC's State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables, 2018, shows national and state-level fruit and vegetable access and production data for 50 states and the District of Columbia. This guide provides actionable steps that public health practitioners, decision makers, and agriculture and food systems leaders can take to promote a healthy food environment and support fruit and vegetable consumption in West Virginia. Full Report:

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in the United States Is Too Low

- Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables can help protect against many serious and costly chronic diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, some cancers, and obesity [1].
- Despite the health benefits, nationwide, only 12.2% of adults meet the daily fruit recommendation and only 9.3% meet the vegetable recommendation [2].
- States and communities can make fruits and vegetables convenient and affordable in the places where children and adults live, work, learn, and play [3].

Fruit and Vegetable Consumption in West Virginia

Only 7.3% of adults meet the daily fruit intake recommendation [2]

Only 5.8% of adults meet the daily vegetable intake recommendation [2]

Fats: More Friend than Foe & Powerfully Anti-Depressant

FUNCTION

- Coat for body & brain cells
- Allows for proper neurotransmission
- Production of adrenal & reproductive hormones
- Supports healthy libido
- Prevents carb cravings
- Provides a long smooth energy ride
- Makes up 60% dry weight of the brain

- Large community-based studies of heart disease prevention strategies showed that among persons with the lowest cholesterol levels, ***there was a increased incidence of death not caused by illness, primarily to suicide, accidents, and violence***

The Human Brain In Numbers, From Its Weight, Neurons, And Amount Of Spinal Fluid (medicaldaily.com)

SOURCES

- Avocados
- Purslane
- Nuts & Nut Butters
- Egg Yolks (the whites are higher in protein)
- Cold Water Fish: Salmon, Sardines…
- Seeds: Chia, flax, hemp
- Grapeseed Oil
- Animal Fats/Tallow
- Coconut
- Olive Oil
- Butter
- Coconut oil

Why Water?

- The brain is made up of 73-75% water.
- "Mild dehydration impairs cognitive performance and mood of men." *Research has shown that dehydration can lead to increased feelings of anxiety, depression, irritability and anger*
- Dehydration can impair focus, short-term memory function and the recall of long-term memory.
- To avoid dehydration, it is recommended to drink plenty of water throughout the day. The amount of water required can vary depending on age, sex, weight, and activity level.
- However, a general guideline is to drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day [1]
- Beverages that increase urination are dehydrating. These include *anything sweetened with sugar or probably high fructose corn syrup, artificial sweeteners made from alcohol sugars such as mannitol, pure alcohol itself, and too much caffeine.*

During 2015–2018, children and adolescents drank an average of 23 ounces of plain water daily, and US adults drank an average of 44 ounces. (Adults need an average of 64 oz/day for optimal health and brain function)

How much water have YOU had today?

Conclusion

I can hear some of you saying, "How can drinking more water really help me avoid relapse" or " What I eat couldn't REALLY improve my sense of well-being, could it? That seems too simple, or too slow!

But, consider this - How many drops of water are in 8 ounces?

There are 3648 drops in 8 fluid ounces of water. Has anyone ever been in a flash flood, or watched a lake slowly refill with water after a drought? Raindrop by raindrop, the lake fills.

Just like us. Every single time we support brain health by something we eat or drink, we are putting our recovery on firmer ground. I have turned off a major craving in someone, simply by giving them food or an amino acid! I have seen someone's entire recovery journey turn around with this information.

We have so much power over our own physical and mental well-being! Isn't it time to make it part of the conversation?

Thank you!

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