- Foods

Men’s Health Month: Eat good mood food to support your mental health

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NUTRITIONAL needs differ with gender and age.



A healthy diet for a man is different from a healthy diet for a woman.

With June being Men’s Health Month, Dr Sivuyile Madikana from Herbalife NAB Southern Africa, shares below six tips to support men’s brain’s optimal function and well-being through food.

“It’s been noted in the literature that men often seek health-care services less than women, leading to poor health outcomes and life expectancy,” said Dr Madikana.

“When it comes to men’s mental health care, they are even less likely to seek psychological therapies, with only 36% of psychological referrals in some health-care systems being for men.

“Reasons include the stigma around mental health and a lack of education and awareness about the topic and its symptoms. The link between mental health and diet is a growing field being researched with evidence leading towards maintaining a good diet and good mental well-being.

“It is no secret that eating a balanced diet full of vegetables and nutrients can improve your sense of well-being and mood.

“Diets high in sugars are said to not be good for the brain, they further affect the body’s regulation of insulin and promote inflammation and oxidative stress.

“There have been studies that compared traditional diets such as Mediterranean and Japanese diets with a Western diet. These showed a 25-35% lower risk of depression in those who maintained a traditional diet,” he said.

Here are six tips to get you going:

Get enough protein: your diet should be made up of at least 30% protein, included in every meal you consume. Protein contains an amino acid that your brain uses to help regulate your mood.

Drink enough water, which will allow you to keep hydrated. Mild dehydration can affect your mood and your ability to keep concentration levels up.

Eat regularly, to help maintain your blood sugar levels and keep you energised and less tired.

Include healthy fats in your diet. Omega-3 polyunsaturated fats can be found in walnuts, salmon, tuna, avocados, and many other Mediterranean food sources. They also lower bad cholesterol, while promoting the increase of “good” HDL cholesterol. Include more whole grains, fruits, and vegetables in your diet. They contain the vitamins and minerals your brain and body need to stay well.

Look after your gut health: good bacteria not only influence what your gut digests and absorbs, but also affect the degree of inflammation throughout the body, as well as your mood and energy level. Healthy food for your gut includes fruit, vegetables, beans and probiotics.