Does Diet Affect Mental Health?

Those who indulge in unhealthy foods are more likely to report experiencing psychological distress, say recent findings.

February 28, 2019 By Alicia Green

Previous studies have shown a link between a poor diet and mental illness. Now, findings from a recent California study published in the International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition that examined adults with mental health problems also supports this connection, reports Loma Linda University.

For the inquiry, researchers assessed data from more than 240,000 telephone surveys conducted between 2005 and 2015 as part of the multiyear California Health Interview Survey, the nation's largest state-focused health analysis and a critical source of information about the racial and ethnic groups that reside in the region.

Scientists found that nearly 13.2 percent of California adults reported experiencing moderate psychological distress and 3.7 percent said they had experienced severe psychological distress.

In addition, adults who consumed a lot of junk food were more likely to report symptoms of such distresses than those who consumed healthier foods.

"This and other studies like it could have big implications for treatments in behavioral medicine," said Jim E. Banta, PhD, MPH, an associate professor at Loma Linda University School of Public Health in California and the lead author of the study. "Perhaps the time has come for us to take a closer look at the role of diet in mental health, because it could be that healthy diet choices contribute to mental health."

Banta noted that the association uncovered between an unhealthy diet and mental illness isn't a causal relationship. But these findings can affect future investigations and methods used by health professionals to administer behavioral medicine treatments.

Researchers observed that the study's results offer more evidence that public policy and clinical practice ought to focus more on improving the diets of those with mental health problems.

In addition, the scientists suggested that "dietary interventions for people with mental illness should especially target young adults, those with less than 12 years of education and obese individuals."

Click here to learn how a healthy diet may lead to better mental health.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/diet-affect-mental-health