

# Nutrition and Mental Wellbeing

Nutrition can influence mental wellbeing, energy levels, and physical health. This leaflet provides general information about the relationship between nutrition and mental health, and how it is considered in psychiatric care.

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## Nutrition Is One Part of Mental Health

Nutrition can:

- Support physical health
- Influence energy, concentration, and mood
- Affect sleep and overall wellbeing

However, nutrition:

- Is not a cure for mental illness
  - Does not replace psychiatric or psychological treatment
  - Works best as part of a broader care plan
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## How Nutrition Can Affect Mental Wellbeing

Eating patterns may influence:

- Blood sugar stability
- Energy levels and fatigue
- Concentration and alertness
- Mood regulation

Irregular or inadequate nutrition can worsen mental health symptoms, particularly during periods of stress or illness.

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## Mental Illness and Eating Patterns

Mental health conditions can affect eating in many ways, including:

- Reduced appetite
- Increased appetite or emotional eating
- Irregular meals

- Limited food choices

These changes are common and reflect illness-related effects, not lack of effort or willpower.

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## Balanced and Regular Eating

Helpful principles often include:

- Eating regular meals where possible
- Including a variety of foods
- Avoiding long periods without eating

Regular nutrition can support energy and concentration, even if food choices are simple.

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## Restrictive Diets and Mental Health

Highly restrictive diets can:

- Increase stress around food
- Worsen anxiety or mood symptoms
- Be difficult to sustain during mental illness

Any major dietary changes should be approached cautiously and discussed with a health professional.

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## Nutrition, Medications, and Physical Health

Some psychiatric medications can affect:

- Appetite
- Weight
- Metabolism

Nutrition and physical health monitoring are part of safe long-term care and may be discussed during treatment.

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## Alcohol and Nutrition

Alcohol can:

- Interfere with nutrient absorption
- Worsen sleep and mood
- Affect appetite regulation

Reducing alcohol intake often supports both mental and physical health.

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## Special Considerations

Additional support may be needed if you have:

- A history of eating disorders
- Chronic medical conditions
- Gastrointestinal difficulties
- Cultural or dietary requirements

Care should always be individualised.

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## Gentle, Practical Approaches

Helpful strategies may include:

- Starting with small, achievable changes
- Focusing on consistency rather than perfection
- Using simple, familiar foods during difficult periods

Doing “something” is often better than aiming for an ideal plan.

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## When Nutrition Becomes a Source of Stress

If food choices or eating patterns:

- Cause significant anxiety
- Become rigid or distressing
- Interfere with daily life

This should be discussed with a clinician, as additional support may be helpful.

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## Working With Other Professionals

In some cases, care may involve:

- GPs
- Dietitians
- Other allied health professionals

Collaborative care supports both mental and physical wellbeing.

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## Summary

Nutrition can support mental wellbeing when approached with flexibility, balance, and compassion.

Simple, regular eating patterns that respect individual needs are often more helpful than strict dietary rules.

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