



Managing Stress Through Lifestyle & Nutrition

TAKEAWAYS:

1. Focus on whole foods, as much as possible.

- Whole foods can be described as 1-ingredient foods, created by Mother Nature, that come from a plant or an animal. Not only are whole foods nutrient-dense sources of carbohydrates, proteins, fats, fibre, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, but whole foods are inherently free of gut-damaging and stress-inducing additives, preservatives, refined sugars and refined oils. Do you need to consume whole foods 100% of the time? Absolutely not, that's certainly not realistic, but do your best to ensure that the majority of the foods that you consume are whole foods.

2. Focus on fibre; eat more vegetables than fruit, opt for whole grains and limit crumbs.

- Fibre-rich foods, specifically prebiotic fibre-rich foods, are fuel for the body's gut bacteria and can, therefore, help to support the health of the body's 2nd brain and the food-mood connection. The Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) of fibre is 25 grams for women and 38 grams for men and fibre can be found in whole grains, beans, lentils, fruits and vegetables. As a general rule, it is best to opt for grain products in their whole-grain format, as opposed to those made from their flours, and ensure that you are consuming more vegetables than fruits. In doing so, you can help to increase your intake of fibre while reducing your sugar intake at the same time.

3. Focus on protein; aim to include a source of protein at every meal.

- Of the three macronutrients, protein is the most satiating, will help to keep you full the longest, and can help to balance your blood sugar. Given that stress affects blood sugar through the fight or flight response, it is imperative that we provide the body with the essential nutrients it needs to help manage this response and this includes protein. Protein can be found in animal and plant-based foods including meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, dairy, beans and lentils. In addition to balancing blood sugar, one of the essential amino acids in protein, tryptophan, is associated with mood support as it is the precursor to serotonin, a mood-boosting neurotransmitter, that helps to stabilize our mood, feelings of well-being, and happiness.

4. Focus on probiotics; look for ways to incorporate fermented foods.

- Fermented foods, such as yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi and kombucha, are packed with beneficial bacteria called probiotics, as well as numerous vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Studies show that fermented foods can help to manage and reduce stress and anxiety by supporting the gut microbiome or the body's 2nd brain. Ideally, aim to incorporate a small serving of fermented foods into your diet on a daily basis, or as many days of the week as possible. A small serving of yogurt, sip of kefir or side of sauerkraut can have many beneficial interactions with your gut and, in the long term, directly affect your mood.



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NUTRITION

5. Supplement for support, as needed.

- Although a healthy diet, adequate sleep and regular exercise will provide the most solid foundation for managing stress, the supplementation of specific nutrients can also help. B-complex vitamins top the list of stress-relieving supplements, as they are essential for brain health. High doses of B vitamins have been shown to improve symptoms of stress and increase energy levels. Each B vitamin plays its own role in the body but, as a group, they are important for supporting the nervous system and converting food to energy. In addition to B vitamins, magnesium is considered our “stress-fighting” mineral. In times of stress and anxiety, the body actually ramps up magnesium excretion and utilizes it at a more rapid rate. Therefore, supplementation of magnesium can be incredibly beneficial during periods of acute or chronic stress. And finally, melatonin, a hormone produced by the brain’s pineal gland to support sleep, can help to combat stress and alleviate stress. Not only is getting adequate amounts of quality sleep important for relieving stress, but melatonin helps to regulate the body’s circadian rhythm, or sleep-wake cycle, which is a key factor in cortisol production, the body’s stress hormone.