Iron Deficiency & Mental Fitness Transcript

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Iron Deficiency and Anxiety Overview

Today I am going to talk to you about how iron deficiency can cause anxiety. Iron deficiency contributes to anxiety, mood disturbances and cognitive issues because iron plays a crucial role in oxygen transport and neurotransmitter production as well as brain function.

is included in the following reference list which you can see below.

How Low Iron Affects Neurotransmitters

which helps with motivation, pleasure and emotional stability, serotonin, which regulates mood and reduces anxiety, and GABA, GABI, aminobutyric acid, a calming neurotransmitter that prevents excessive neural excitability, important for anxiety control.

When iron is low, these neurotransmitters are not produced efficiently, leading to increased feelings of stress, worry and restlessness.

Oxygen Delivery, Brain Fog, and Stress Response

Now I'm going to talk about oxygen and brain function because iron is a key component of hemoglobin, which transports oxygen in blood, and low iron leads to reduced oxygen supply to the brain, causing brain fog, dizziness and fatigue, poor cognitive function, all of which make it harder to focus and regulate emotions.

Increased stress response, triggering hyperactivity in the amygdala, the brain's fear center can also occur. This can cause an overactive fight-or-flight response worsening anxiety symptoms.

Also, an increased heart rate and panic symptoms can be related to severe iron deficiency and can lead to things like heart palpitations due to the body trying to compensate for low oxygen levels.

Panic-Like Symptoms and Sleep Disruption

This can mimic panic attacks causing a rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, dizziness and lightheadedness, and a feeling of impending doom which is very common in anxiety.

Many people mistake these iron deficiency symptoms for an anxiety disorder or a panic attack. But then there's also iron deficiency and sleep disruptions.

This itself can worsen anxiety. You see, iron is an important nutrient for restful sleep, and iron deficiencies can lead to restless legs syndrome, a constant urge to move legs leading to lack of sleep and insomnia, or poor sleep quality, which increases stress and anxiety levels as well.

poor sleep worsens anxiety. This creates a vicious cycle. So how do you know if your anxiety is linked to iron deficiency or something else?

Signs That Anxiety May Be Linked to Iron Deficiency

Symptoms of iron-deficiency-related anxiety include the following persistent fatigue and brain fog, dizziness or feeling lightheaded, frequent heart palpitations, rapid heartbeat, cold hands and feet, brittle nails, hair loss, pale skin, shortness of breath, and even short of breathe with mild exertion.

Now how do you test to confirm that you have iron deficiency? Well, you ask your doctor for a ferritin blood test, which is the stored iron, and hemoglobin levels get checked as well.

How do increase iron to reduce anxiety using iron rich foods? Well, heme iron, most absorbable form of iron is found in things like red meat, liver, poultry, fish.

Testing Ferritin and Hemoglobin Levels

Non-heme iron a plant-based source is in lentils, dark chocolate, spinach, quinoa, tofu and pumpkin seeds. But always pair the plant based source of hee iron with vitamin C from things such as citrus or bell peppers to enhance absorption.

Iron-Rich Foods and Absorption Tips

You should also avoid consuming iron rich foods with coffee, tea or calcium rich food as they block absorption. If you need an iron supplement, first and foremost, you should speak to your doctor.

Options include Ferrous Biscosinate which is gentle on the stomach and you take with Vitamin C for better absorption So when do you need to see a doctor if anxiety persists despite dietary changes?

When to See a Doctor and Consider Supplements

If symptoms of dizziness, rapid heartbeat, fatigue, if any of these worsen, or if your pharyngium levels are below 30 nanograms per milliliter, this may actually require iron supplementation and you would need speak to your doctor.

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