Introduction: Nutrition and Anxiety

Can nutrition treat anxiety? Let's talk about the science behind food and mental health. Did you know that your gut and brain are constantly communicating?

What you eat might be making your anxiety worse or better. Anxiety disorders are the most common psychiatric conditions, but medications and therapy don't always work for everyone.

Let's explore six nutritional strategies backed by research that may help reduce anxiety. Let us talk about brain chemistry and metabolism. You see, anxiety is linked to oxidative stress, insulin resistance, inflammation, and gut microbiome changes.

Conventional treatments like antidepressants often fail because they don't address these underlying metabolic issues.

Gut Health and the Microbiome

A few years ago, I published a research article with a colleague, which really was talking about using nutrition as a metabolic treatment for anxiety.

And today I wanted to tell you why nutrition matters. Nutritional interventions target these root causes, offering a low risk, high reward approach. So let's first talk about the role of gut health in anxiety, the microbiome brain connection.

In other words, the gut-brain connection contains about 40 trillion microbes that influence mood through the vagus nerve, hormones, and inflammation. People with anxiety often have gut microbiome imbalances leading to more stress and information.

So how do you improve your gut health? Well, for one thing, you can eat more fermented foods, fiber, prebiotic foods and more. You can also reduce the processed foods, sugar and artificial sweeteners that harm gut bacteria.

There are also other nutritional strategies for anxiety, such as avoiding these artificial sweetness and processed sugar. Aspartame disrupts the gut and increases stress hormone levels in the brain.

Cutting Sugar, Sweeteners, and Gluten

A study in animals looking at aspartame triggered anxiety-like behaviors by altering neurotransmitter balance. If you happen to be gluten sensitive or concerned that gluten may be setting off your anxiety, you can consider a short-term elimination of gluten for one to two weeks.

You see, gluten increases intestinal permeability by allowing inflammatory toxins into the bloodstream. Now let me be clear, I'm not saying that you should give up gluten.

I am saying some people may be more sensitive than they realize and there's also a condition called non-celiac gluten sensitivity. So my recommendations and suggestions are always highly personalized for your individual needs.

In some people, gluten may worsen brain inflammation and anxiety, but others may tolerate it just fine. I also feel like the source of food is very important.

Omega-3s and Anti-Inflammatory Foods

For example, supermarket sliced bread that has been on the shelf for up to a week or longer compared to an artisanal sourdough loaf of bread that's made fresh at a bakery is a very different food product.

So I think that the source of the food also matters and the sources of gluten. Also, increasing omega-3 fatty acids that include EPA and DHA found in salmon, sardines, and short-chain fatty acid in walnuts and flaxseeds can be very helpful because omega 3s reduce inflammation and improve dopamine and serotonin function, key for calming the brain.

A study showed 12 weeks of omega3 supplementation reduced anxiety by 20% in medical students. Now using turmeric or curcumin from turmeric as a natural anti-inflammatory can also be important.

Curcumen is found in turmeric and it blocks inflammatory pathways linked to anxiety. Studies have shown that curicumin improves neurotransmitter function and lowers stress hormone levels.

My tip is always to combine turmeric with a pinch of black pepper because the peppery in blackpepper can boost the absorption by 2000%.

Vitamin D and Sunlight

You should also get enough vitamin D. You see, low levels of vitamin d are highly correlated with anxiety and depression. One study found that 50,000 international units of Vitamin D per week significantly reduced anxiety.

Now natural sources of vitamin D include sunlight. Spending 10 minutes just in natural sunlight without sunscreen or sunblock will now allow for natural vitamin production.

But you can also get vitamin d from fatty fish, eggs and mushrooms. There's also some emerging research that ketogenic therapies may be helpful. There is ongoing research in this area that a high fat, low carb diet reduces inflammation and provides ketones as a clean energy source for the brain.

Ketogenic Therapies and Key Takeaways

Animal studies suggest that Ketones can reduce anxiety and improve brain metabolism. More human studies are needed and this is on-going research which can be very powerful as we follow different treatments for anxiety.

My takeaways at the end of this include the following. Anxiety isn't just a mental disorder, it's also a metabolic condition. The food you eat plays a huge role in how you feel.

If you want to improve how your feeling emotionally and lessening your anxiety, start by adding omega 3 fatty acids, turmeric, vitamin D, reduce your sugar and processed food intake.

cut back on artificial sweetness and you will actually start to see an improvement over time. Which of these different strategies have you tried? Let me know in the comments below.

And hey, if you like my content, subscribe to my YouTube channel, hit the notification bell and give us a like.