

NUTRITION NOTES

January - February 2024

- **Nutritional Psychiatry:** The topic of “food and mood” is gaining attention in the field of mental health. Nutritional psychiatry is the practice of using food and food supplements as supportive treatments for mental health disorders. Serotonin is a key player in the mood game. The gastrointestinal system (GI) produces 95% of your serotonin. Serotonin production is affected by the “good” bacteria that make up your GI system. Presence of “good” bacteria is influenced by the quality of your diet. Patients struggling with emotional health could benefit from a nutritional assessment of their diet to determine any possible negative impact on their mental health.
- **New Year’s Resolutions:** Focusing on weight loss in the New Year always follows the holiday season. Food and body shaming may be at a crescendo in January due to excessive indulgences and mindless grazing. We encourage our patients to revamp their words and focus on goals to improve their fitness, health, and mood, rather than having a laser focus on weight loss. This shift in focus creates a shift in how we view food and ourselves. We should *never* give a moral value to food such as *good* or *bad!* **Food is food**, not a mechanism to punish or reward ourselves.
- **Balanced Diet:** When asked to define a balanced diet, most people mention the five food groups (grains, vegetables, fruits, meat, and dairy), or a certain balance of calories from carbohydrate, protein, fat, fiber, vitamins, and minerals -- all of which are true. A balanced diet is also one that is **“not extreme,”** *and supports a peaceful and enjoyable relationship with all food, allowing for indulgences or whimsical eating for no good reason.* This is important for physical and mental health.
- **Women, Weight & Menopause:** The frequent scenarios we hear from women 45-50+ y/o: “I am continually gaining weight; I can’t lose weight regardless of how little I eat; or, I know my metabolism is dead, because I walk 3x/wk for 20 min and my weight stays the same.” These women sometimes present as depressed, sad, mad, tearful, or extremely frustrated because of their seeming inability to lose weight. We know that weight loss does become more challenging as one ages due to changes in hormones, metabolism, decrease in muscle mass, lack of sleep, and sedentary lifestyle----- but ***it is not impossible!*** Interference with weight loss, or continual weight gain, can generally be identified along with how to resolve this problem. The patient will then need to decide if they can/want to commit to the effort required to change behaviors. □