



BMC HEALTH LETTER

Volume 1

May 2021

Mental Health Month

Mental health encompasses an individual's mental, emotional, psychological and social health. Our mental health determines how we interact with others, how we cope with stress and how well we are able to make choices about our health. Having good mental health is important at every stage of life and poor mental health can negatively impact our physical health by increasing incidence of several chronic diseases. It is estimated that about 1 out of every 2 people will be diagnosed with a mental illness in their lifetime (CDC, 2018).



Though poor mental health is common, it is not normal. If you or someone you know needs help, reach out to your doctor, a mental health professional or ask for help from a trusted friend. Seeking help is nothing to be ashamed of, and remember: "You are not alone"

BMC now offers various mental health services available on our campus provided by Mrs. Brenda Mayfield, MSN, CRNP, PMHNP-BC, who is serving in partnership with UAB for better health in our community. For more information, contact Bess Russell, RN, CHC, our employee health nurse at (205) 926-4881 or erussell@bibbmedicalcenter.com

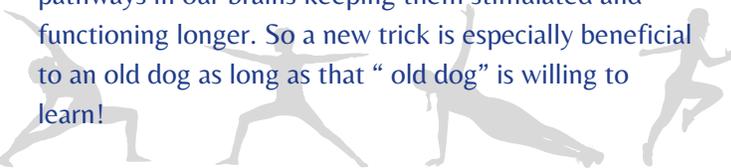
Tips for Managing Stress

1. Set aside 10 min each day to go to a private place to still your mind and body.
2. Keep a feelings journal. Identify what events/thoughts stimulated the feelings. Ask yourself what you can do to either safely increase or decrease the feelings.
3. Draw a picture of something that makes you happy.
4. Relieve stress by helping others. Do an act of random kindness to warm your heart.
5. Find humor in a stressful moment. While depression suppresses our immune systems, laughter boosts our body's T cells that gobble up germs inside us and make us able to fight illness more efficiently. Humor also releases endorphins, the body's natural painkillers.



Exercise & Mental Health

Exercise is a great way to decrease anxiety, depression and stress while getting fit. Fat cells in our bodies produce excess cortisol "the stress hormone". When we are over stressed and overweight we go into an unhealthy cycle of fat cells producing cortisol and more cortisol produces more fat. People who move briskly 30-45 minutes, 3x week have less anxiety and depression than those who do not. This is because exercise releases dopamine, norepinephrine and serotonin, the same chemicals medications use to treat depression and anxiety. Remember the saying "You can't teach an old dog a new trick?" Studies show that as we age learning how to do a new exercise or play a sport creates new pathways in our brains keeping them stimulated and functioning longer. So a new trick is especially beneficial to an old dog as long as that "old dog" is willing to learn!



Nutrition for Brain Power

Try this nutrient-packed recipe: Vegetable & Chicken-Fried Rice

4 servings, 20 minutes, One Pan

Ingredients:

4 C Cooked Brown Rice (Folate & Mg)
 1-2 Chicken breasts, diced (B12)
 1 Egg (B12)
 2 C spinach or Kale (Mg & Folate)
 2 C vegetable of choice (try frozen peas & carrots, onion, garlic, broccoli or whatever you have available).
 3-4 Tbsp Low Sodium Soy Sauce
 2 Tbsp Olive Oil
 Salt, Pepper, Sesame Seeds & Chili Flake to taste

Instructions:

1. Cook chicken fully in 1 Tbsp oil, set aside
2. Add 1 Tbsp oil to pan, cook vegetables until tender
3. Add chicken, rice & soy sauce into pan
4. Create a well, scramble the egg, stir
5. Season with salt, pepper, chili & sesame seeds
6. Serve hot, or allow to cool & portion for easy week day lunches

**Tip: for a low carb option, swap 1/2 the rice for riced cauliflower

Deficiencies of Magnesium and B vitamins (folate & B12) can be linked to higher rates of depression and anxiety. Not only are these nutrients widely available, they are effective in improving symptoms of depression and anxiety (Mahan & Raymond, 2017). Magnesium foods: legumes, whole grains, green leafy vegetables, tree nuts. Folate foods: green leafy vegetables, legumes, fortified grains. B12 foods: meat, poultry & dairy.