

ENGAGEMENT

Blog – Mental health: Eating Well

The following blog has been prepared by TAL. It is available to use in white-label format for communications and is designed to provide information on positive ways to support mental health.

-BLOG-

Eating well for mental health

They say you are what you eat so it makes sense that eating foods which are rich in nutrients will help your overall wellbeing.

Mental health research backs up the idea of eating well and living a healthy lifestyle. It's widely accepted that a diet high in plant-based foods and omega 3 fatty acids, for example, can improve and regulate mood. Other research suggests brain disorders, such as dementia, can be impacted by diet.

What we eat is one component of our behaviour (with others including physical activity, sleep and stress) that contributes to our physical and mental health.

Good habits for healthy eating:

1. Eat breakfast

Starting your day well is essential for keeping your mind happy and strong. Eating breakfast each day can improve concentration, alertness and memory, and mental performance.

2. Make healthy workday habits

The key to eating well at work is planning. Pack a healthy lunch based on foods and remember to include snacks to avoid going for less healthy options when your energy levels slump. You can find some easy and interesting recipes on [TAL's HeartChecker](#) page.

Some tips for better workday eating include:

- work with a group of colleagues to create a more supportive, healthy eating environment
- remove fundraising chocolates and biscuit tins and instead set up workplace fruit bowls with a donation tin
- advocate for your workplace to adopt healthy catering policies for training and meetings.

3. Feed your mind

Recommended foods in the [Australian Dietary Guidelines](#) include plenty of vegetables, legumes, fruit, low-fat dairy, wholegrain breads and cereals, lean meats, chicken and fish, eggs, nuts and seeds. It's also important to look for low Glycaemic Index (GI) carbohydrate-rich foods for sustained brain energy.

If you make just one change, it should be adding more vegetables to your diet. Some of the ways you can make a positive impact on your diet include:

- think about new and creative ways to eat vegetables
- learn how to select and cook vegetables to help you get more into your day

- have plenty of vegetables in your fridge
- tinned and frozen varieties also offer valuable nutrients and can be convenient alternatives.

4. Snack healthily

Snacks are the downfall of many otherwise healthy diets. Being prepared with healthy snacks avoids energy dips and helps you get in all the vitamins and minerals you need for the day. It can be helpful to think of the five food groups when planning your day's snacks:

- **Fruit:** a piece of fruit and a bag of cut up fruit or a bag of grapes
- **Vegetables:** vegetable sticks and a vegetable-based dip, such as hummus or tzatziki, or an avocado on crackers
- **Breads and cereals:** wholegrain crackers or a fruit bun
- **Meat and alternatives:** a small container of raw or dry roasted nuts
- **Dairy:** a tub of reduced fat yoghurt makes a convenient snack if you work somewhere with a fridge
- **Other ideas:** air popped popcorn, dried fruit and nuts, pumpkin and sesame seeds, vegetable pikelets, vegetable muffins, vegetable soup.

Need more help?

There is no one perfect diet that is suitable for everyone. If you need help creating a diet that suits your lifestyle, see an accredited practising dietitian or your GP.

For some great healthy recipes, visit the [TAL HeartChecker website](#) and the [Healthy Food Guide](#).

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