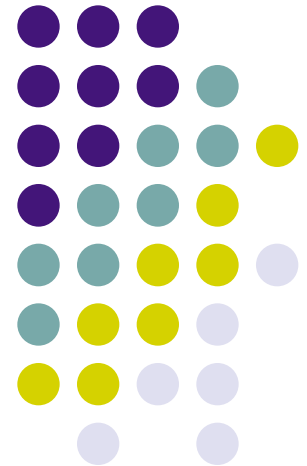
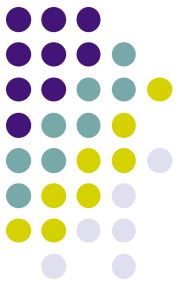


# Nutrition and Your Mental Health

**Rebecca Sovdi, Registered Dietitian**  
**Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**  
**Health Canada, FNIHB**

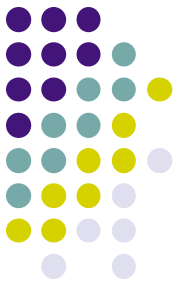


# Nutrition and Your Mental Health



- Healthy eating practices - influence, improve or decrease your mental health
- Nutrition and the brain, moods, behaviours
- Nutrition for children - setting a foundation
- Nutrition and suicide
- Healthy eating and addiction

# Holistic Health



- Holistic health means having total wellness in the mind, body, and spirit
- Holistic healing restores balance between the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual systems
- Less focus on physical health, more focus on balanced health
- Remove stigma's = better treatment



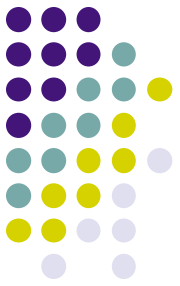
Reference: Lumia – Lighting the way to holistic healing ([www.lumia-holistic-healing.com](http://www.lumia-holistic-healing.com))

# Healthy Eating and Holistic Health



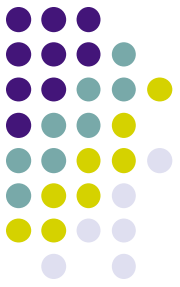
- The foods that we eat, whom we eat with, and how those foods nourish our bodies are a part of that holistic health balance.
- Simply put, healthy eating contributes to a healthy mind, body and spirit and not just physical health
- Unfortunately, many of the foods we eat today are over-processed, contain chemicals and preservatives, and lack nutrients.

# Nutrition and the Brain

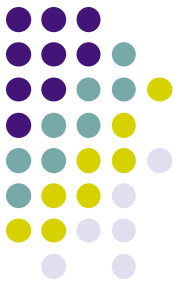


- Food intake affects a person's mood, behaviour, and brain function – almost immediately affected
- Example – How do you feel after eating a meal or snack that consists highly of processed foods? After you skip a meal?
- Feeling irritable, grouchy, angry, tired, or sad is an immediate symptom of the effect on the brain

# Nutrition and the Brain



- Brain cells are the body's largest cells, have high energy and nutrient needs, and are susceptible to damage
- Fragile and sensitive to toxins such as aluminum, lead, pesticides, MSG, aspartame, food preservatives, and food additives
- Over time poor nutrition can alter brain chemistry and nerve function affecting mood, sleep patterns, and thinking

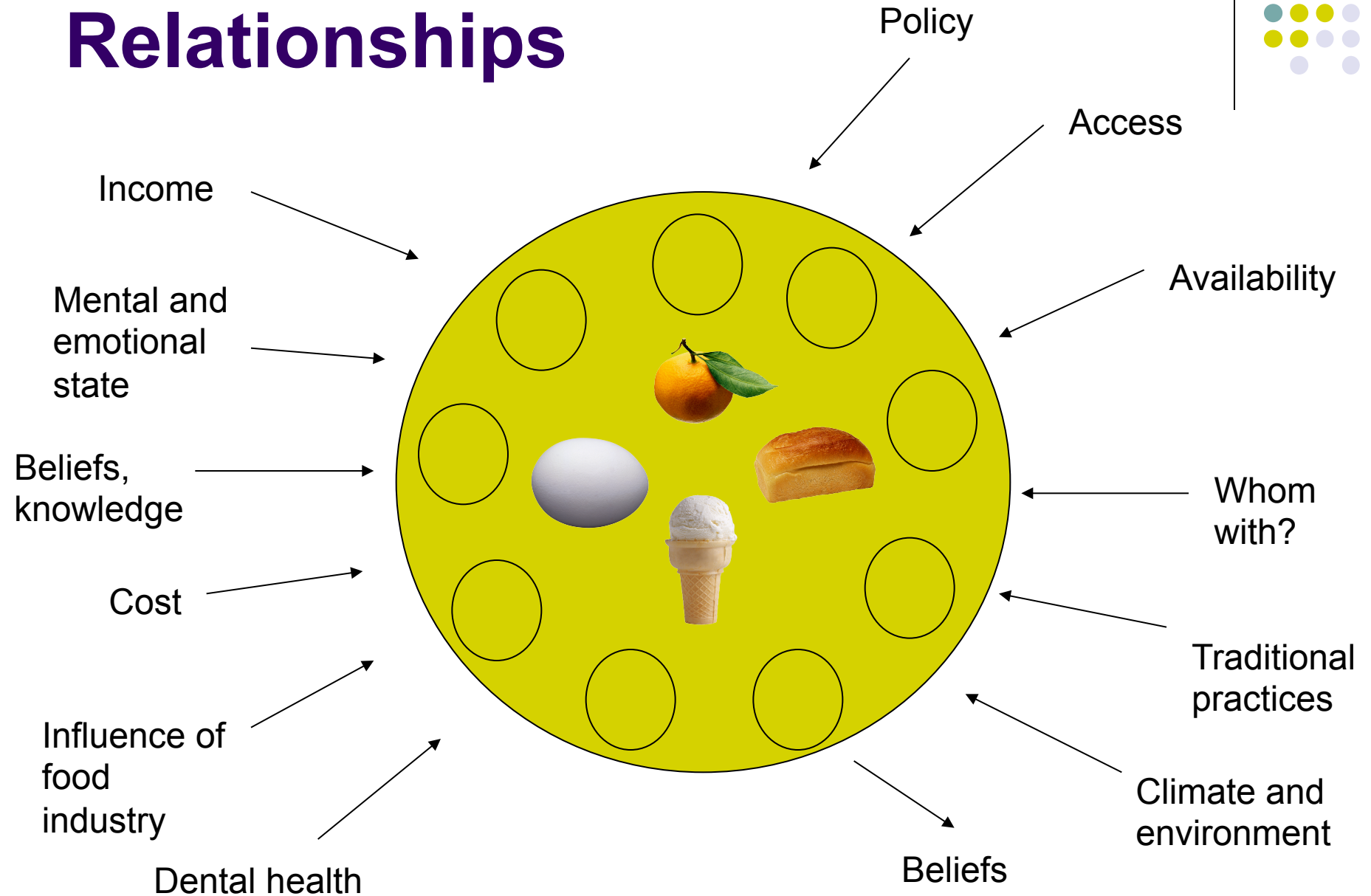
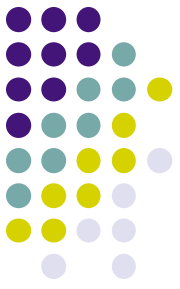


# Nutrition and Eating Habits

- Our eating habits are shaped by society, culture, availability, family, stress, work, habits, and advertising
- This means that they can be difficult to change because of barriers or can be easy to change with support from loved ones



# Food Security or Healthy Food Relationships



Policy

Access

Income

Mental and emotional state

Availability

Beliefs, knowledge

Whom with?

Cost

Traditional practices

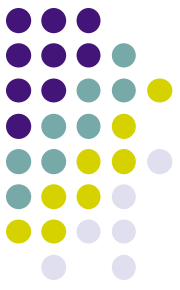
Influence of food industry

Climate and environment

Dental health

Beliefs

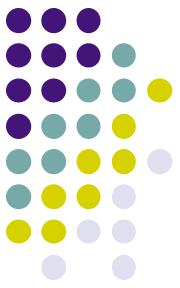




# What is Normal Eating?

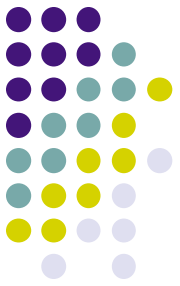
- “Normal eating is going to the table hungry and eating until you are satisfied. It is being able to choose food you like and eat it and truly get enough of it -not just stop eating because you think you should. Normal eating is being able to give some thought to your food selection so you get nutritious food, but not being so wary and restrictive that you miss out on enjoyable food. Normal eating is giving yourself permission to eat sometimes because you are happy, sad or bored, or just because it feels good. Normal eating is mostly three meals a day, or four or five, or it can be choosing to munch along the way. .... continued

# What is Normal Eating (con' t)



- ...It is leaving some cookies on the plate because you know you can have some again tomorrow, or it is eating more now because they taste so wonderful. Normal eating is overeating at times, feeling stuffed and uncomfortable. And it can be undereating at times and wishing you had more. Normal eating is trusting your body to make up for your mistakes in eating. Normal eating takes up some of your time and attention, but keeps its place as only one important area of your life.
- In short, normal eating is flexible. It varies in response to your hunger, your schedule, your proximity to food and your feelings.”

● Ellyn Satter

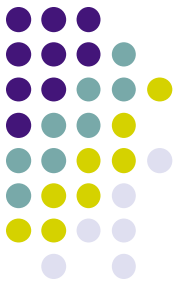


# Nutrition and Mood

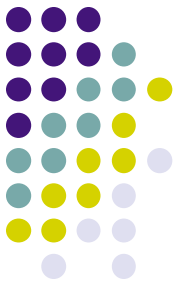
- Takes years of non-nutritious eating to experience physical health consequences
- Our mental and emotional health are immediately affected – poor mood or behaviour may be the first signs of a nutritional deficiency



# Nutrition and Children's Behaviour



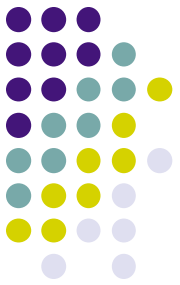
- Children's bodies are more sensitive to poor eating habits or foods
- Often, children start off their day with foods that are loaded with simple sugars, artificial colours, and artificial flavours or no food
- Some children are more sensitive to processed foods or certain foods than others
- Antibiotics can also cause changes in mood



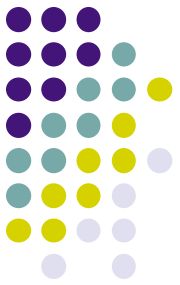
# Nutrition and Children

- Setting a good foundation
  - Nutrition during pregnancy
  - Breastfeeding
  - Home-made baby food
  - Avoiding highly processed foods
  - Meals and snacks
- Ellyn Satter – [www.ellynsatter.com](http://www.ellynsatter.com)

# Fad diets

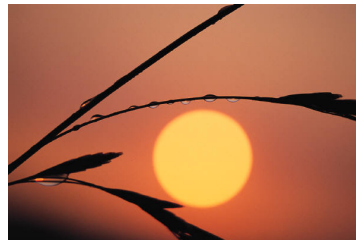


- Extreme low fat diets can increase risk for depression and anxiety
- Extreme low carbohydrate diets can increase risk for fatigue, irritability and headaches from ketosis
- Other elimination diets can cause nutrient deficiencies

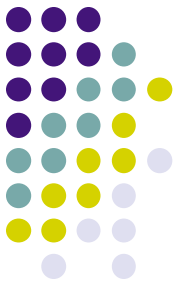


# Nutrition and Mental Disorders

- Increased prevalence of mental health disorders linked to poor quality diet
- Common nutritional deficiencies seen in patients with mental health disorders
  - Omega 3 fatty acids
  - B vitamins
  - Some minerals and amino acids



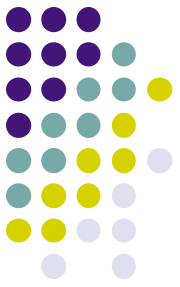
# Omega 3 Fats



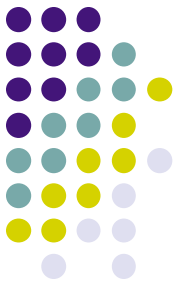
- Play a vital role in health
- Traditional diets had great sources of omega 3 fats – eating foods that ate algae (synthesize omega 3's)
- Reduce coronary artery disease, heart attacks, reduce pain from Crohn's disease, decrease blood pressure, decrease joint pain, improve health for people with diabetes, and many others



# Omega 3 Fats and Mental Health



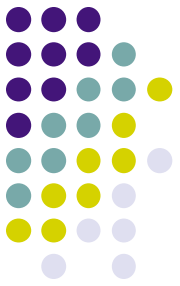
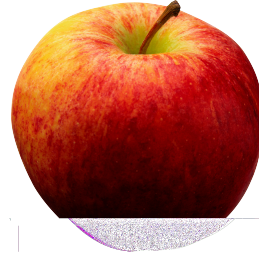
- Also linked with improving
  - Pregnancy and postpartum depression
  - Major depression
  - Bipolar disorder
  - Anxiety, stress, and violence
  - Attention deficit disorder
  - Schizophrenia
  - Memory and cognition
  - Suicide prevention



# Omega 3 Fats and Health

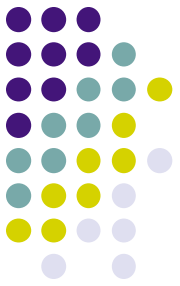
- Sources –
  - fatty fish
    - salmon
    - mackerel
    - herring
    - sardines
    - halibut
    - mussels
  - flax seeds or flax oil, walnuts
  - supplements

# B Vitamins



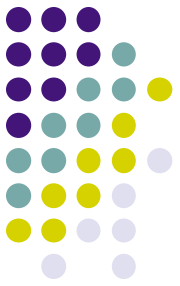
- B Vitamins are water soluble vitamins important for metabolism, healthy skin and muscles, immune system, and nervous system
- Consider taking a vitamin B complex supplement and eating a nutritious diet containing a variety of vegetables and fruit, whole grain breads and cereals, eggs, meats, and dairy products

# Depression



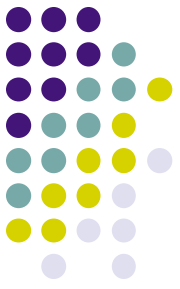
- 1 in 7 Canadians
- Affects women more than men (2:1)
- Depression has many different causes including genetics, physical causes for chemical imbalances, experiential causes such as trauma, socio-economic conditions, stress, abuse or chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, cancer, or arthritis.

# Depression

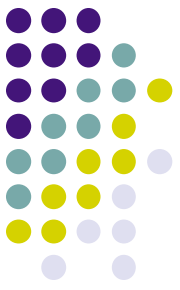


- Depression can lead to severe weight loss and nutrient depletion due to decreased appetite
- Depression could also lead to weight gain from emotional eating
- Side effects of many common medications can be nausea, vomiting, constipation, diarrhea, or increased appetite

# Depression (or other Mood Disorders)



- Good nutrition
  - Multivitamin supplement
  - Have a loved one bring food nutritious food
  - Good sources of protein with every meal
  - Omega 3 fats
  - Vegetables and fruit
  - Few added sugars is important
  - Regular activity



# Stress and Anxiety

- Everyone deals with stress on a daily basis – just like we all look and act different, we also cope with stress in different ways
- Nutrition can help our bodies deal with stress
  - Maintain a stable blood sugar
    - Refined carbohydrates and sugar spike blood sugar and then lower blood sugar leading to anxiety, nervousness, and irritability
    - Empty calories may replace nutritious foods
  - Limit caffeine if prone to anxiety

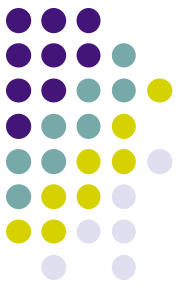


# Anxiety

- Anxiety disorders can be caused by food intolerances such as an intolerance to casein (milk protein) or gluten (wheat protein)
- Another cause can be a lack of healthy gut bacteria or an overgrowth of candida







# Suicide and Nutrition

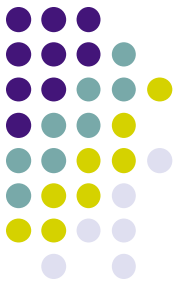
- Study found people with lower levels of essential fatty acids and total serum cholesterol were at greater risk to carry out suicidal acts
- Essential fatty acids trials were successful in reducing suicide acts
- Indicates benefit to change diet to one consisting of essential fatty acids and high in meats, fish, fruits, and vegetables



# Recovery from Addiction

- Healthy eating and nutritional supplements can support recovery
- Addictive substances change the brain chemistry long after a person stops the drugs
- A low nutrient dense diet can hinder recovery or make it more challenging

# Alcoholism and nutrient deficiency



- Studies have shown that alcoholics are usually chronically deficient in certain essential nutrients AND replacing these imbalances can reduce or eliminate cravings
- Along with other traditional treatments, healthy eating and nutrient supplementation should be a part of recovery

# Recovery from addiction



- Healthy sources of protein should be eaten with every meal – this supplies the body with amino acids
  - Amino acids are building blocks of neurotransmitters important for transmitting signals throughout the body for mood, memory, emotions, sleep patterns and hormone levels
  - Healthy functioning neurotransmitters will aid in recovery by keeping moods/emotions stable, allowing for healthier sleep patterns, and maintaining proper hormone levels

# Recovery from addiction

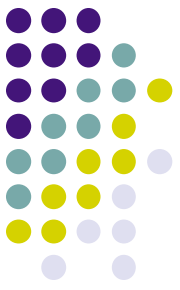


- Sugar cravings
  - Sugars are often craved by people that are detoxing from a drug or alcohol addiction
  - Sugar can cause some of the same chemical and hormone reactions in the brain as drugs/alcohol
  - Avoiding sugars will aid recovery and help to reduce drug cravings
  - Will also balance blood sugars to decrease ups and downs in moods and behaviours.



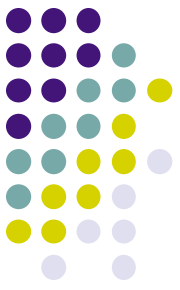
# Recovery from Addiction

- Drug dependence can deplete the body of important B vitamins – especially alcohol abuse
  - B vitamin deficiency from alcoholism can cause tremors, nerve damage, and dementia
  - Consider taking a vitamin B complex supplement and eating a nutritious diet containing a variety of vegetables and fruit, whole grain breads and cereals, eggs, meats, and dairy products



# Recovery from Addiction

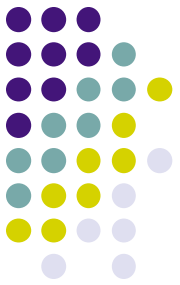
- Addiction can also deplete the body of magnesium – especially alcoholism
  - Magnesium is helpful in dealing with anxiety because it calms the nervous system
  - Magnesium and calcium work together – so take a supplement containing both
- Vitamin D, the sunshine vitamin
  - Helpful for depression and aids the absorption of magnesium and calcium – 1000 IU is recommended (however 400 IU is the RDA)



# Key Take Home Messages

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Good sources of protein with every meal
- Limit processed foods
- Good sources of omega 3 fats – Fish at least twice a week
- Support loved ones to choose healthy food
- Watch for irregular behaviors and link to food intake





# References

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