

Wellness News

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“Love and meaningful relationships are vital to physical and emotional wellbeing.” – Deepak Chopra

Healthy Choices

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

Mental health is an important part of overall health and well-being. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Stress and Coping

Many of us face challenges that can be stressful, overwhelming, and cause strong emotions. It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry. Learning to cope with stress in a healthy way will make you, the people you care about, and those around you become more resilient.

Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

- Take care of your body:
 - Breathe deeply, stretch, or meditate
 - Eat healthy, well-balanced meals
 - Be physically active
 - Get plenty of sleep
 - Limit alcohol intake
 - Avoid misusing prescription opioids
 - Avoid smoking and tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.
 - Continue with routine health appointments, tests and screenings.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others.
- Connect with community or faith-based organizations.



Anthem offers help when you need it!

With **Emotional Well-being Resources**, administered by Learn to Live, receive support to help you and your household live your happiest, healthiest lives.

Built on the proven principles of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), our digital tools are available anywhere, anytime. They can help you identify thoughts and behavior patterns that affect your emotional well-being – and work through them. You'll learn effective ways to manage stress, depression, anxiety, substance use, and sleep issues.

Take a quick assessment to find the program that's right for you. To access **Emotional Well-being Resource:**

Log in to **anthem.com**, go to **My Health Dashboard**, choose **Programs**, and select **Emotional Well-being Resources**.

How the Foods you Eat Affect How you Feel

Think about it. Your brain is always "on." It takes care of your thoughts and movements, your breathing and heartbeat, your senses — it works hard 24/7, even while you're asleep. This means your brain requires a constant supply of fuel. That "fuel" comes from the foods you eat — and what's in that fuel makes all the difference. Put simply, what you eat directly affects the structure and function of your brain and, ultimately, your mood.

Serotonin: the feel-good hormone in your gut

Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that helps regulate sleep and appetite, mediate moods, and inhibit pain. Since about 95% of your serotonin is produced in your gastrointestinal tract, and your gastrointestinal tract is lined with a hundred million nerve cells, or neurons, it makes sense that the inner workings of your digestive system don't just help you digest food, but also guide your emotions. What's more, the function of these neurons — and the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin — is highly influenced by the billions of "good" bacteria that make up your intestinal microbiome. These bacteria play an essential role in your health. They protect the lining of your intestines and ensure they provide a strong barrier against toxins and "bad" bacteria; they limit inflammation; they improve how well you absorb nutrients from your food; and they activate neural pathways that travel directly between the gut and the brain.

Studies have compared "traditional" diets, like the Mediterranean diet and the traditional Japanese diet, to a typical "Western" diet and have shown that the risk of depression is 25% to 35% lower in those who eat a traditional diet. Scientists account for this difference because these traditional diets tend to be high in vegetables, fruits, unprocessed grains, and fish and seafood, and to contain only modest amounts of lean meats and dairy. They are also void of processed and refined foods and sugars, which are staples of the "Western" dietary pattern. In addition, many of these unprocessed foods are fermented, and therefore act as natural probiotics.

This may sound implausible to you, but the notion that good bacteria not only influence what your gut digests and absorbs, but that they also affect the degree of inflammation throughout your body, as well as your mood and energy level, is gaining traction among researchers.





Food and Brain Health



The foods we eat can have a big impact on the structure and health of our brains. Eating a brain-boosting diet including the foods listed here can support both short- and long-term brain function.

- **Leafy greens:** Kale, spinach, arugula, collards, beet greens and chard are great sources of fiber, folate and vitamins C and A.
- **Colorful fruits and vegetables:** Red peppers, blueberries, broccoli, avocado and eggplant can affect inflammation, memory, sleep and mood. Reddish-purplish foods are “power players” in this category.
- **Seafood:** Sardines, oysters, mussels, wild salmon and cod are sources of long-chain omega-3 fatty acids that are essential for brain health. Seafood is also a good source of vitamin B12, selenium, iron, zinc and protein. If you don't eat fish, chia seeds, flax seeds and sea vegetables are also good sources of omega-3s.
- **Nuts, beans and seeds:** Cashews, almonds, walnuts and pumpkin seeds, Black and red beans, lentils and legumes can also be added to soups, salads and stews or enjoyed as a meal or a side dish.
- **Spices and herbs:** Turmeric, cinnamon, rosemary, sage, saffron, and ginger.
- **Fermented foods:** Yogurt; sauerkraut; kefir, kombucha, and kimchi
- **Dark chocolate:** Dark chocolate also has plenty of antioxidants, as long as you stick to at least 70% and above, and make sure that it doesn't have too much sugar.

Beyond adjusting the diet, a person can optimize their brain function by:

- Not eating too much or too little
- Getting enough sleep
- Keeping hydrated
- Taking cold showers
- Exercising regularly
- Reducing stress through yoga, mindfulness, or meditation
- Reducing alcohol intake



Recipe: Baked Spinach, Feta & Egg Peppers

Recipe adapted from *Eating Well*.

Bake eggs directly in a pepper for a gorgeous breakfast dish that all will enjoy. Use any colored bell pepper, just be sure to remove the seeds.

Prep time: 55 minutes Servings: 4

Ingredients:

- 2 large bell pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt
- 4 large eggs
- 2 tbsp reduced fat milk
- 1 teaspoon ground pepper
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped onions
- 2 cups chopped spinach
- 1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese



Directions:

1. Pre heat oven to 375 degrees
2. Halve peppers lengthwise; remove and discard seeds. Place the peppers cut-side up in an 8-inch-square microwave-safe dish. Microwave on High until just tender, 2 1/2 to 3 minutes. Pat dry and sprinkle with salt.
3. Whisk eggs, milk and pepper in a medium bowl.
4. Heat oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook, stirring, until softened and beginning to brown, about 2 minutes. Add spinach and cook, stirring, until wilted, 1 to 2 minutes more. Divide the spinach mixture among the pepper halves. Sprinkle with feta, then top with the egg mixture. Bake until the filling is set, 30 to 35 minutes.



Source: [eatingwell.com/recipe/7918926/baked-spinach-feta-egg-stuffed-peppers/](https://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/7918926/baked-spinach-feta-egg-stuffed-peppers/)

Benefits of Grounding

Grounding, or earthing, is a therapeutic technique that involves doing activities that “ground” or electrically reconnect you to the earth. This practice relies on earthing science and grounding physics to explain how electrical charges from the earth can have positive effects on your body.

The most recent scientific research has explored grounding for inflammation, cardiovascular disease, improved blood flow muscle damage, chronic pain, and mood.

The central theory from one review study is that grounding affects the living matrix, which is the central connector between living cells. Electrical conductivity exists within the matrix that functions as an immune system like antioxidants. It is believed that through grounding, the natural defenses of the body can be restored.

Types of Grounding or Earthing:

- Walking barefoot
- Laying on the ground
- Submerging in water (ocean, lakes)
- Using grounding equipment such as grounding mats, sheets, blankets, socks or bands

Grounding can be performed inside or outside, with or without equipment. No matter how you choose to perform grounding, make sure you're aware of your surroundings and use earthing equipment safely to reduce risks.

Source: <https://www.healthline.com/health/grounding#types>