

Vitamin B crucial to children's mental health, study finds

October 10 2012



(Medical Xpress)—A new study has uncovered a significant link between vitamin B levels and the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents.

The research led by The University of Western Australia-affiliated Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, and published in the international journal *Preventive Medicine*, indicated that children with a [diet](#) low in B-vitamins were more likely to experience [mental health](#) and [behavioural problems](#) than those with a healthier diet rich in B-vitamins.

UWA Researcher Carly Herbison said the study, "Low intake of B-vitamins is associated with poor adolescent mental health and

behaviour," is the first to report on a direct link between the prevalence of externalising behaviour problems in adolescents at 17 years and a reduced intake of B1, B2, B5, B6 and [folate](#).

"B-vitamins are essential for the production of neurotransmitters, like serotonin, which modulates behaviour in humans and can contribute to feelings of well-being and happiness," she said.

"Previous studies have shown that externalising mental health and behaviour problems developed during adolescence are related to a higher risk of offending and substance abuse later in life," said Ms Herbison.

"What this study looked at was the relationship between diet, specifically B-vitamin intake and the presence of these externalising behaviours."

Report senior author UWA Professor Wendy Oddy, who heads the Institute's nutritional research, said the study reinforces how a [healthy diet](#) can play a key role in improving mental health outcomes for young people.

"There is a great message in this in how diet may help prevent [mental health problems](#). Improving what our children eat and ensuring they are getting essential B-vitamins from foods such as nuts, seeds, [whole-grains](#), legumes and fruit and vegetables can have a really positive impact on their mental health and well-being," Professor Oddy said.

The research was funded by the Cardiovascular Disease and Depression Strategic Research Program, a partnership between the Heart Foundation and beyondblue: the national depression and anxiety initiative.

The study used detailed nutritional and mental health data collected from participants in the Western Australian Pregnancy Cohort, Raine Study.

beyondblue CEO Kate Carnell AO said: "This research reinforces that to

have good mental health, you need to have a balanced diet and 30 minutes' regular exercise on most days. It's important to see good mental health as part of your overall mental and physical well-being, especially during growth years."

The study has recommended further research into the link between B-Vitamins and adolescent mental health and well-being.

Scholars who join Clough will be part of an advanced training program, which includes leadership training and executive mentoring.

More information: [www.sciencedirect.com/science/ ...ii/S0091743512004616](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/...ii/S0091743512004616)

Provided by University of Western Australia

Citation: Vitamin B crucial to children's mental health, study finds (2012, October 10) retrieved 5 May 2024 from

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