

Four in five Americans would change diets to improve mental health, but rate other life factors as more impactful

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Nutrition and mental health are linked, and studies on mental wellness

and the gut biome, the Mediterranean diet and the DASH diet, among other topics, have been garnering more attention in recent years. Americans are picking up that understanding: the latest American Psychiatric Association Healthy Minds Monthly poll reveals that two-thirds (66%) of American adults feel knowledgeable about the link between nutrition and mental health. A majority (81%) would be willing to change their diet to improve mental health.

The poll was fielded by Morning Consult from March 16–17, 2023, among a sample of 2,220 with a margin of error of plus or minus two percentage points.

Younger adults were more likely than [older adults](#) to say they felt knowledgeable about the relationship between diet and [mental health](#); 80% of adults aged 18–34 said they felt very or somewhat knowledgeable on the subject contrasted with 47% of those over the age of 65.

"Mental health is overall health and what we eat and drink can affect how we feel," said APA President Rebecca W. Brendel, M.D., J.D.

"Many aspects of a healthy diet, like staying hydrated and eating nutrient-rich fresh fruits and vegetables, can help brain function. Conversely, too much caffeine, sugars, or processed foods can make us feel off the mark."

When asked how they'd changed their diet in the past, most adults said it was by drinking more water (66%) and eating more fruits (50%) and vegetables (53%). Fewer had avoided processed foods (36%), reduced alcohol consumption (28%), or eaten more whole grains (25%). About one in eight adults (12%) said they had not changed their diet.

"Many of us have the ability to make choices about what we eat," said APA CEO and Medical Director Saul Levin, M.D., M.P.A. "It's

important that everyone realizes the impact of nutrition on mental health, and that you don't have to order a fancy meal service or take expensive supplements to consume foods and beverages that promote mental well-being. Simply drinking more water can make a difference."

More Americans say work (70%), family stress (68%), exercise (65%) and social habits (61%) have a more significant impact on their mental health compared to their diet (58%). They are equally likely to say that their diet (58%), [family history](#) (57%) and genetics (55%) have a significant impact on their mental health.

Provided by American Psychiatric Association

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