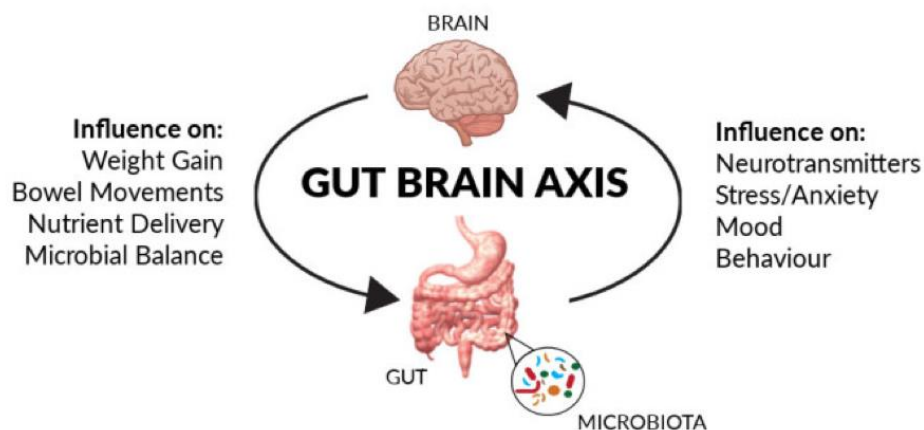


Nutrition

November 2020

When the body is in a stressed state due to developing ME/CFS/FM, energy is diverted away from the digestive system (seen as non-urgent), and towards the heart, muscles, legs and arms (etc. for 'fight or flight'). There is a less effective breakdown and absorption of food, leading to bloating, flatulence, pain, irritable bowel syndrome etc. Around 90% of people with ME/CFS/FM report experiencing IBS, other food intolerance and gastric issues after developing these conditions.



Stress also depletes the immune system and about 80% of our immune system cells are in the gut, as first line of defense against unsafe food, a poor immune system will therefore leave a person more susceptible to food sensitivities and intolerances etc.

Good nutrition and gut health are important, but firstly it is important to learn to calm the body so it can digest and absorb the nutrients you are feeding it.

Find ways to spend more time in a healing state – parasympathetic dominance (rest & digest):

- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Mindfulness / meditation
- Mindful eating (CPDR)

Cephalic Phase Digestive Response (CPDR)

Bringing awareness to our eating experience (awareness = being present). This is an amazing force for metabolism. CPDR- (the brain phase of digestion) – involves anticipation, aroma, visual stimulation, taste, pleasure, of the meal, and is responsible for 30 – 40% of the total digestive response to any meal.

Chemical receptors on the tongue and in the oral and nasal cavities are stimulated by smelling the food, tasting it, and paying attention to it. This is a powerful catalyst for assimilating and digesting nutrients.

In contrast, if you're mindlessly wolfing down your food, you will only be getting 60 – 70% of the optimal digestive response – decreased blood to the digestive organs; less

oxygenation; less digestive enzymes in the gut - and consequently you will be more prone to bowel disorders > lowered immunity.

Suggestions from Malcom Whitaker Naturopath with over 37 years of practice:

You are what you eat:

Food is much more successful than supplementation as a way to get the right enzymes, minerals, proteins, carbohydrates etc into your body. The best option, if possible, is to grow your own vegetables and cook from scratch, then you know what has gone into growing and making the food – no surprises with wholefoods!

Buying organic is a good option, but this can be very expensive. Farmers markets or stores that direct source the from local growers are great locally. We all use supermarkets at various times for fruit and vegetables as well.

Another option for home grown is to try sprouts. These contain 300% more nutrients than standard vegetables as they are live whole plants and are very quick and easy to grow in any home. All you need to do is cover some seeds like red clover, alfalfa, lentils, mung beans, radishes, cress etc with water for a day then pour off, keep them warm and dark and rinse each day with fresh water. After a few days they will be ready to eat.

The times you eat are important:

The body needs the fasting period over the night to rest, if we eat too late, we often go to bed with a stomach which is still busy digesting, and this can upset our sleep. Try to eat dinner by 6:45pm at the latest so you have mainly finished digesting by the time you sleep. Fish takes as many as 5 hours to be properly digested by the body.

Always eat breakfast, eat a decent lunch and a smaller dinner or try small meals often.

Chew your food:

Chewing is in fact part of digestion; the maceration of food helps the stomach and intestines to know what is being eaten so they can produce the right enzymes to then process the food. If you eat too fast, then the body does not have time to work out what to produce. Sugar is a good example it needs a specific enzyme to be process and if not, it will move into the bowel undigested and then cause bloating etc. Try 25 chomps with each mouthful.

Pre- and Pro-biotics:

These can help the gut to digest foods; kefir, whey powder, probiotic tablets, yogurt, onions, garlic, bitter greens, bananas, leeks, asparagus and oats, all help to boost the good bacteria in the gut that can then aid absorption.

Kefir can be made with coconut, soy etc and the sourer the better. Our bodies seem to react well to sour and bitter foods like dandelion leaves, vinegar etc.

Kombucha first thing can help set the body up for the day, but if you try something on an empty stomach you will work out if you can tolerate it quickly. *(Remember Kombucha contains sugar and a low percentage of alcohol so use sparingly)*

Kimchi, sauerkraut and other fermented foods can be good for your gut as a small portion of your meal. Helpful herbs are sage, rosemary, thyme.

Effects:

Foods can influence the brain differently for each person. An example is Hypoglycaemia; often causes mental functioning to dip, then we eat sugar and we feel better, then we dip again etc. Try a protein of nuts, seeds or oats instead as they have a longer effect in the blood (*lower Glycaemic Index (GI)*).

If we have a food intolerance, we often become irritable and effected mentally as well as physically. To find out if a food is upsetting you cut the food out of your diet completely for 4 days, then on the 5th day eat a lot of that food and see how you feel.

Delicious take-a-ways from today:

- At the heart of it all, a clean, regular, nutritious and varied diet taken in a 'healing state' is one of the best medicines we can offer ourselves.
- Everyone's dietary and nutritional needs are different and many of us need different things at different times, so listening to and respecting the body as we try new foods and/or supplementation is important. Our body's feedback is more valuable than any expert advice 'out there'.
- We need all food groups. Some of us need more of one food group than others and it is up to us to discover what is the best fit for us.
- No food group is the enemy despite some of the messages we receive in our culture. Akin to the age old adage 'Moderation is key'.
- Supplementation is not necessarily the answer to all of our ME/FM symptoms. For some of us this can turn out to be a costly and disheartening endeavor. Once again, it comes down to a regular, clean, nutritious diet taken in a healing state that can make a big difference to our health over time.
- Like a curious detective we can gently experiment with different foods, supplementation and gut health protocols to see if they improve our health status.
- Focus on what we CAN do to make a difference to our health. Small changes over time CAN make a difference, so trust the process and keep going.
- Psychology and Nutrition are intimately connected. Eating in a healing state - that is being present, connected, slowing down, AND chewing and enjoying our food when we eat is a crucial part of the digestive process.
- Healing requires a multi-faceted, multi-layered approach. Digestion and Nutrition are important pieces of this much bigger picture.
- We know intuitively if we need to improve our digestion and nutrition. Some of us with ME/CFS/FM have been working on our digestion for many years and see little improvement; others proclaim huge improvement. If you have cleaned up your diet and are still not seeing the changes you would like, be curious about what resonates. Whatever 'jumps out' at you is likely to be a signpost to your next step, the next layer to be unpeeled, so to speak.