

You are what you eat, say scientists

20th December, 2017



Scientists have cast new light on the effects our diet has on our mental health. Researchers say what we eat affects and alters our brain chemistry up until the age of 30. They say this explains why older adults are more emotionally stable and resilient than under-30s. The research was conducted by a team led by Lina Begdache, a professor of health and wellness studies. Researchers said that while the link between our diet and diabetes, heart disease and obesity is well established, there is a paucity of research on the influence our dietary intake has on mental health. The researchers also suggested that mental well-being stimulated healthy eating, healthy practices, and exercising.

The research was carried out via an anonymous internet-based survey. It was sent through social media platforms to different professional and social group networks. Professor Begdache found that adults under 30 who ate fast food more than three times a week scored higher on levels of mental distress, anxiety and depression. She said that for adults over 30, the study found that eating less carbohydrates and more fruit reduced anxiety and depression. Begdache pointed to research showing how a Mediterranean diet was as good for our brain as for our body. She said: "It has all the components that are important for the healthy structure of the brain."

Sources: tandfonline.com / *theguardian.com* /

Writing

Scientists say we are what we eat. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

light / mental health / brain / chemistry / stable / team / obesity / influence / research / anonymous / survey / professional / fast food / anxiety / carbohydrates / diet

True / False

- a) Scientists shone a light on people's diets. T / F
- b) Researchers say the food under-30s eat changes their brain. T / F
- c) A researcher said there is little research on our diet and mental health. T / F
- d) The researcher suggested that being healthy encourages healthy eating. T / F
- e) The research was done on people the researchers never met. T / F
- f) A survey was sent via just one social network. T / F
- g) The article said that people who ate faster were more depressed. T / F
- h) A professor said the Mediterranean Diet was not good for mental health. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. cast | a. conducted |
| 2. alters | b. well-balanced |
| 3. stable | c. parts |
| 4. paucity | d. encouraged |
| 5. stimulated | e. study |
| 6. carried out | f. spread |
| 7. survey | g. formation |
| 8. anxiety | h. shortage |
| 9. components | i. worry |
| 10. structure | j. changes |

Discussion – Student A

- a) How healthy is your diet?
- b) Do you eat any food to keep your brain healthy?
- c) What do you know about the brain?
- d) Are the under-30s less emotionally stable than the over-30s?
- e) How does lots of cola and coffee affect our brain and mood?
- f) Why is there so little research on diet and mental health?
- g) Do mentally-well people have healthier lives?
- h) Will you change what you eat from now on?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Scientists have cast new | a. emotionally stable |
| 2. what we eat affects and alters | b. carbohydrates |
| 3. adults are more | c. being |
| 4. diabetes, heart disease | d. our brain chemistry |
| 5. mental well- | e. internet-based survey |
| 6. carried out via an anonymous | f. distress |
| 7. It was sent through | g. light on the effects |
| 8. mental | h. as for our body |
| 9. eating less | i. and obesity |
| 10. as good for our brain | j. social media platforms |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- Are you what you eat?
- What do you eat that might affect your mental health?
- How might fast food affect our mental well-being?
- What could you eat less or more of to reduce depression?
- What do you know about the Mediterranean diet?
- What kind of diet is best for our mental health?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

- affects and alters our brain shtemriyc
- emotionally stable and resltneii
- diabetes, heart disease and yoesbti
- a paucity of research on the eleifcunn
- our tyrdiea intake
- iaedlmtust healthy eating
- via an smonynoau internet-based survey
- social media rlmsatfop
- mental distress, aixenty and depression
- eating less basoeydrtrcha
- the noemspncot that are important
- the healthy rruutstec of the brain

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. j	3. b	4. h	5. d
6. a	7. e	8. i	9. c	10. g

Role Play

Role A – Chocolate

You think chocolate is the best food for our health. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their foods. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): garlic, chicken or spinach.

Role B – Garlic

You think garlic is the best food for our health. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their foods. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): chocolate, chicken or spinach.

Role C – Chicken

You think chicken is the best food for our health. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their foods. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): garlic, chocolate or spinach.

Role D – Spinach

You think spinach is the best food for our health. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their foods. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): garlic, chicken or chocolate.

Speaking – Food

Rank these with your partner. Put the best food for our health at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|--------|-------------|
| • beef | • chocolate |
| • fish | • nuts |
| • rice | • garlic |
| • tofu | • spinach |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.