

New Connections Mind and Body: Mental Health and Food

Natural remedies often attempt to reduce the body's level of inflammation so as to prevent heart disease, autoimmune disorders, or arthritis. Less is heard about the connection between mental health and inflammation levels. We want to think of mental disorders as mainly brain disorders so as to simplify the complexity of our human body down into separate parts. However, a more systemic and holistic perspective allows one to consider how the health of the entire body could shed light on the mental health of the person. Since inflammation can occur in every part of the body, this is a particularly helpful symptom to consider.

Dr. David Perlmutter, M.D., a board-certified neurologist, is a leader in complementary medicine and researcher on how to improve mental health. Back in 2004, he published his new approach in "The Better Brain Book." By changing one's lifestyle, such as diet and levels of inflammation, a person could reach higher levels of mental clarity and even reverse brain dysfunction. In his more recent book, "The Grain Brain," he builds an impressive research based argument for the need to reduce inflammation levels caused by wheat and sugar so as to prevent dementia, attention deficit, depression, anxiety and many more symptoms of mental disturbance and disease.

One of the tests Dr. Perlmutter recommends to measure inflammation levels in the body is the C-Reactive Protein Test. A blood test, this inflammation marker is often recommended by a physician interested in heart disease risk factors. Results range from 0 to 4, with 4 giving the highest reading and 0 being no inflammation. If you have a virus or an allergic reaction going on when taking the test, it will naturally be elevated, so try to avoid testing during these times. The Life Extension Foundation, a non-profit organization researching innovative ways to promote health, recommends a C-Reactive Protein level of .07 or below. Average scores for an adult eating the typical American diet range between 2 and 3. The C-Reactive Protein Test can be requested from your primary physician or ordered directly from the Life Extension Foundation at lef.org.

The question then becomes how to reduce your own individual level of inflammation. Losing weight is often recommended by all medical providers and yet the "how to do this" can be confusing. One diet does not fit everyone and dieting seems to be a hit or miss process. A very precise approach to finding the reasons behind your own level of inflammation is the ALCAT test. Based on the book, "Your Hidden Food Allergies Are Making You Fat," by Rudy Rivera, M.D. and Roger Deutsch, CEO, a person's food sensitivities can be tested using a simple blood test. Dr. Rivera developed this test himself after becoming depressed, gaining weight, and being unable to find a diet to work for him. It measures the reaction of your white blood cells when exposed to a variety of different foods. This occurs as food is assimilated into the blood stream from the walls of the colon. If you are sensitive to a particular food, it could be several days before a reaction is noticed in your body. This test, however, will let you determine which foods work with your immune system and which foods prompt an inflammatory response. Your results can help you detox your own unique body. After just a few weeks, you will watch extra weight disappear, say goodbye to those mood swings and brain fog, and most likely experience life without allergies. And those C-Reactive Protein numbers, they will magically fall below 1.0. Then don't be surprised if your cholesterol and triglyceride levels drop, blood sugar plummets, and achy joints disappear. This is indeed a complete mind and body make over jump starting your mental and physical health in ways you may not have thought possible.

Jan Gallagher, LMHC, is in private practice in Jacksonville, FL, and recently became a provider of the ALCAT Test. Contact her at (904) 707-2669.

