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Anxiety and Blood Sugar

Also, is there a connection between a low carb diet and anxiety?

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Over the years neurologists and others studying the brain have learned about an abundance of very interesting and informative characteristics of the brain. This has been made possible because of advanced brain scans.

These scans have not only provided information on various brain systems and functions and information on resulting problems when one of these systems doesn't function optimally, but they have allowed an abundance of helpful suggestions to emerge on how to optimize functioning of various areas of the brain.

Best of all: there are really good implications for anxiety and panic attack sufferers.

One such implication concerns the basal ganglia system of the brain, blood sugar levels, carbohydrates and anxiety.

First though, what the basal ganglia system is:

The basal ganglia system is an area of the brain that is responsible for many processes such as fear, anxiety, panic attacks, and other things.

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What's really great though is that by optimizing the functioning of the basal ganglia, things such as fear and anxiety can be decreased while at the same time things such as motivation and energy levels can be increased.

But how does one optimize the basal ganglia system?

This can be done by keeping blood sugar levels consistent throughout the day. Fortunately this can be done by what and how you eat.

What do I mean?

By eating more frequently throughout the day (for example, eating 5 times a day in smaller quantities instead of 3 big meals) helps to stabilize blood sugar levels. Have you ever watched animals such as horses eat? You'll notice that they graze throughout the day as opposed to eating several big meals like we humans are inclined to do. This grazing helps keep blood sugar levels stable.

But there is another factor at play here: it's important what you eat. Specifically it's important that you have your hunger satisfied throughout the day by utilizing food that lasts longer in the body.

Food that lasts longer typically doesn't cause a jump in blood sugar levels. Remember how important it is to keep blood sugar levels as consistent as possible throughout the day?

So, in my opinion, a HEALTHY diet is one that is:

- A. lower in carbohydrates (than the TYPICAL Western diet) – PARTICULARLY LOW IN CARBOHYDRATES WITH A HIGH GLYCEMIC LOAD,
- B. lower in sugar.
- C. Consumed more frequently throughout the day in lesser quantities

Success with this approach just takes some learning. Please bear with me a little more.

You need to know that the term "glycemic load" refers to.

To explain this I'll have to explain what the glycemic index is.

The glycemic index is a system that ranks carbohydrates according to their effect on blood sugar. The more dramatic your blood sugar response, the more insulin your body needs to produce in order to bring down your sugar levels to normal.

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Glycemic load takes into account both a carbohydrate's glycemic index as well as how many carbohydrates are contained in a typical portion. This is a better predictor of how high your blood sugar is raised.

A carbohydrate with a high glycemic load will produce a greater spike in energy because of a more dramatic blood sugar response; HOWEVER this spike is followed by a more dramatic drop in blood sugar - referred to as a crash.

This crash makes you feel lethargic and hungrier. Obviously, given what has been discussed above regarding the basal ganglia system, this crash is not desired.

That's why eating a diet that consists of carbohydrates with a lower glycemic load, in my opinion, is best for anxiety, panic attacks, weight loss and overall wellness.

I'm not suggesting that this dietary approach is in itself a magic potion for anxiety and panic attacks, but I am saying it is a great adjunct to the many other things that have been discussed in this newsletter.

There are many great tasting sources of carbohydrates lower in their glycemic load ranking and many great sources of protein and healthy fats: vegetarian, meat, fish dairy, vegetables, nuts, protein powders.

Take care,

Matthew Wagner
Panic Attack Recovery Newsletter

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