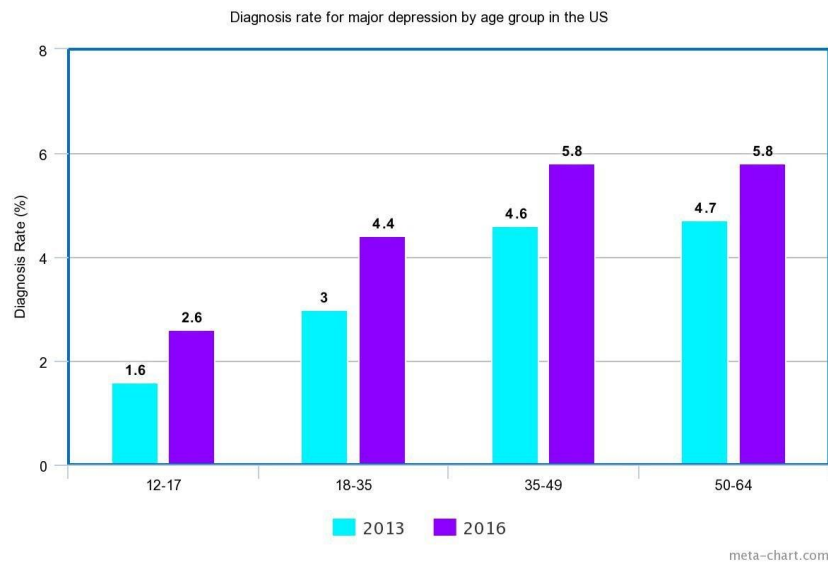
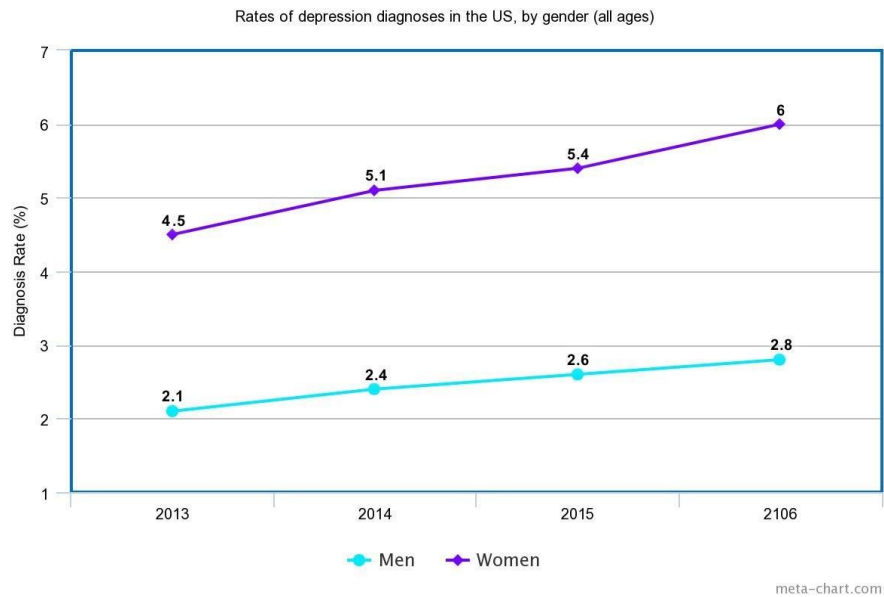


How the Food We Take for Granted Can Cure Depression

The world we live in is plagued by affective disorders—mental health disorders that affect mood (“Affective Disorders”). This year, the major insurance company BlueCross BlueShield released a report that delved deeper into the trends of depression. This report analyzed the 41 million people that BlueCross BlueShield insures, and found that depression diagnoses in America increased 33% from 2013 to 2016 (“Major Depression”).



And just like there has been an increase in the number of depression diagnoses there has been an increase in the number of Americans who have begun to rely on antidepressants. But an

antidepressant is just a preventive measure, the second the pills stop the depression returns. Dr. Eric Berg, an associate professor in the Community Health division at Howard University who focuses on helping his patients to use nutrition to improve health, believes that there is hope to cure depression and the key to this secret lies in the food we eat. Research even agrees that food and mood go hand in hand. Depression can be caused by many reasons including vitamin, nutrient, and mineral deficiencies.

Depression has been linked to countless deficiencies. According to a study by the Indian Journal of Psychiatry, B vitamins are undeniably linked to the mounting rate of depression diagnoses (Rao). B vitamins can be found in a variety of food such as fish, poultry, meat, eggs, or dairy and are used up by the body in stressful situations and are not absorbed, thus someone having a stressful week is going to need more B vitamins (Berg). Because of their relationship to stress B vitamins can actually provide mood boosters. A study titled Neuropsychobiology reported that “supplementation of nine [B] vitamins in 10 times the excess of normal recommended dietary allowance for 1 year improved mood in both men and women (Rao).” Another vitamin deficiency that has been related to depression include folate, which can be gained by eating dark green vegetables and dried legumes.

Many minerals also affect bodily functions that can lead to happiness. Calcium really helps to reduce stress and help in maintaining sleep cycles because a lack of sleep is definitely something that can lead to depression (Berg). Many vitamins use calcium carbonate which does not provide the same benefits as calcium citrate or any natural foods such as cheese and plain yogurt. Another mineral definitively tied to depression is zinc. “At least five studies have shown that zinc levels are lower in those with clinical depression” and taking zinc supplements has shown to also increase the effectiveness of antidepressants (Rao). Foods high in zinc include

oysters, beef, lamb, and spinach. By eating foods such as these, people suffering from depression can reduce or even eliminate the need for antidepressants.

Although all of this research makes many people limit the amount of “unhealthy” food that they are taking in, it is important to remember that almost everything can be healthy if consumed in moderate quantities, such as the essential fatty acid, omega-3. Many times people who choose to go on a diet in order to help their depression can actually make it worse. An important trend that has been shown by some recent studies is that lowering plasma cholesterol by diet and medications actually increases depression (Rao). These fatty acids are essential to the biochemical and biophysical qualities of cell membranes and longer chains of polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) are proven to decrease the development of depression. Omega-3 and omega-6 are found in flaxseed, soybean, canola oils, and seafood. By maintaining a healthy balance of these fatty acids many depression symptoms can be curtailed and even eliminated altogether.

Many mental health professionals are constantly looking for ways to hide depression, but according to vast amounts of research the key might lie in fighting, not hiding, the depression by reducing vitamin, nutrient, and mineral deficiencies. Many cutting-edge researchers have already started to help people to transition diets that can help prevent or reduce the effects of depression. But in a time where eating healthy might not be at the very top of everyone’s to-do list, it is important that people are well informed and educated about the massive benefits of certain very important foods.

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