



Honoring God With Our Bodies Through Nutrition:

Psychosis

■ by Stephanie Shelton, PhD, LCSW

Psychosis is a symptom of mental illness that is typically characterized by changes in personality, impaired functioning, and a distorted or nonexistent sense of reality. According to the DSM-V Psychotic disorders include: Delusional Disorder, Psychotic Disorder, Schizophreniform, Schizophrenia, and Schizoaffective Disorder. Treating psychosis is very difficult as the symptom itself prohibits the individual to think coherently. Antipsychotic medication is the best treatment option, however as I have found working with clients who experience psychosis, adding some nutritional benefits enhance the treatment. Below you will find some simple adjustments to your diet that can assist in treating psychosis symptoms.

Stimulants

Blood sugar problems are much higher in individuals with schizophrenia, which can be caused by a variety of stimulants, including sugar, refined carbohydrates, caffeine, alcohol and cigarettes, as well as stimulant drugs. In addition, the use of antipsychotic medication can trigger blood sugar imbalance. Stimulants have been shown to induce psychosis, therefore it is strongly encouraged to reduce your intake of sugar, refined carbohydrates, caffeine and stimulant drugs and eat a low glycemic load diet.

Essential Fats

Essential fats are used to build the brain and keep it functioning. Individuals with psychosis have a decrease in essential fats in their frontal cortex. When essential oils from fish and vegetables are increased, psychotic symptoms are decreased. Foods rich in essential fats include avocados; nuts such as walnuts, pecans, almonds, and pistachios; olives; olive oil; flaxseeds; salmon; tuna; and dark chocolate.

Antioxidants

Oxidants destroy the brain cells and are shown to be higher in individuals with psychosis. Antioxidant nutrients such as vitamins A, C and E have been shown to help. Vitamin C deficiency specifically, is more common with individuals with a mental illness. Studies have shown that an increase in Vitamin C alone can decrease hallucinations and improve speech. Foods high in antioxidants include fruit and vegetables. It is important to eat a variety of fruit and vegetables to get the assortment of antioxidants needed. A rule of thumb is to eat the rainbow, meaning eat different fruit and vegetables of different colors.



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Niacin (Vitamin B3)

Individuals with a deficiency in Vitamin B3 have symptoms including hallucinations and thought disorder. Studies show that individuals with schizophrenia who have been given doses of niacin for an extended period have improvements in their psychotic symptoms. Foods rich in B3 include tuna, lean chicken breast, lean pork chops, beef, portobello mushrooms, brown rice, peanuts, avocados, sweet peas, and sweet potatoes.

Folic Acid and B12

Folic Acid and B12 are important to assist in maintaining a chemical balance in the brain.

Studies have shown that individuals who experience psychosis lack the appropriate amount of these vitamins. When individuals who have schizophrenia are given a dose of folic acid and B12 as part of their treatment, an improvement in their mental health state is noted. Foods that are high with Folic Acid include legumes, asparagus, eggs, leafy greens, beets, citrus fruits, brussel sprouts, broccoli, nuts and seeds, and beef liver.

As a reminder, these are suggestions to work alongside the help of regular Christian counseling and any recommendations from a medical doctor. It may be best to have someone who is close to you and does not exhibit psychosis to monitor the effects that the nutritional changes have on your symptoms. ■

References

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