Stop and Smell the Roses with Zinc

Posted by Katie Wandasiewicz in Psychiatric Nutrition

The smell of warm baked cookies can make us feel cozy and comforted. A whiff of gardenias can take you back to an amazing summer when you used that gardenia body wash. Smell is emotional for humans. Scent connects us to memories of people, places and things that we’ve cherished or developed aversions to throughout our lives.

People actually suffer more emotionally after losing their sense of smell than if they were to lose their sight. In fact, since it can’t be known if a rat has lost a job or a family member in animal studies of depression, researchers remove the part of the brain called the olfactory bulb that enables them to smell and this brings about depression in them. The olfactory bulb is located near the amygdala in the brain which is responsible for many emotions and the hippocampus which processes memory.

The nutrition we get from food can enhance this function of the brain and help keep our lives vibrant and enjoyable. Zinc plays an especially important role in the brain and its ability to process smells and tastes. It is involved in the processes of cell division and growth in the olfactory bulb and many other tissues in the body and is needed for hundreds of enzymes to function optimally. Zinc deficiency has been linked to many mental difficulties such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, anorexia, hyperactivity and autism. Many factors such as stress, infection, PMS, and drinking alcohol increase the body’s need for zinc.

The Recommended Dietary Allowance or RDA for zinc is 11 milligrams a day for men and 8 milligrams a day for women and the tolerable upper limit is 40 milligrams per day. Low protein or vegetarian diets may put people at risk for zinc deficiency because zinc is best absorbed in the animal protein form and the phytic acid in grains can block zinc’s absorption and uptake into cells. Meat, fish, seeds and nuts are good sources of zinc and oysters are an incredibly rich source boasting 25 milligrams per serving. Zinc is also believed to play a role in memory, libido, sleep and dream recall. Bump up the zinc in your diet today and see what it can do for your brain.

Tweet: Zinc deficiency has been linked to many psychological conditions such as schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, anorexia, hyperactivity and autism.

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References


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