



Toronto  
**Vegetarian**  
Association

# Can a Plant-based Diet Improve Mental Health?

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# A bit about me

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- I'm a Registered Dietitian with a PhD in nutrition
- I live in Nelson, BC with my vegan partner and 4 plant-based kids. We love to cook and bake vegan food!
- I run an online private practice where I work with people across Canada to optimize their nutrition
- I have 20 years of experience working in nutrition, including research, public health, teaching and clinical
- In my practice I see a lot of mental health issues, especially since the lockdown







Framework for nutrition  
and mental health

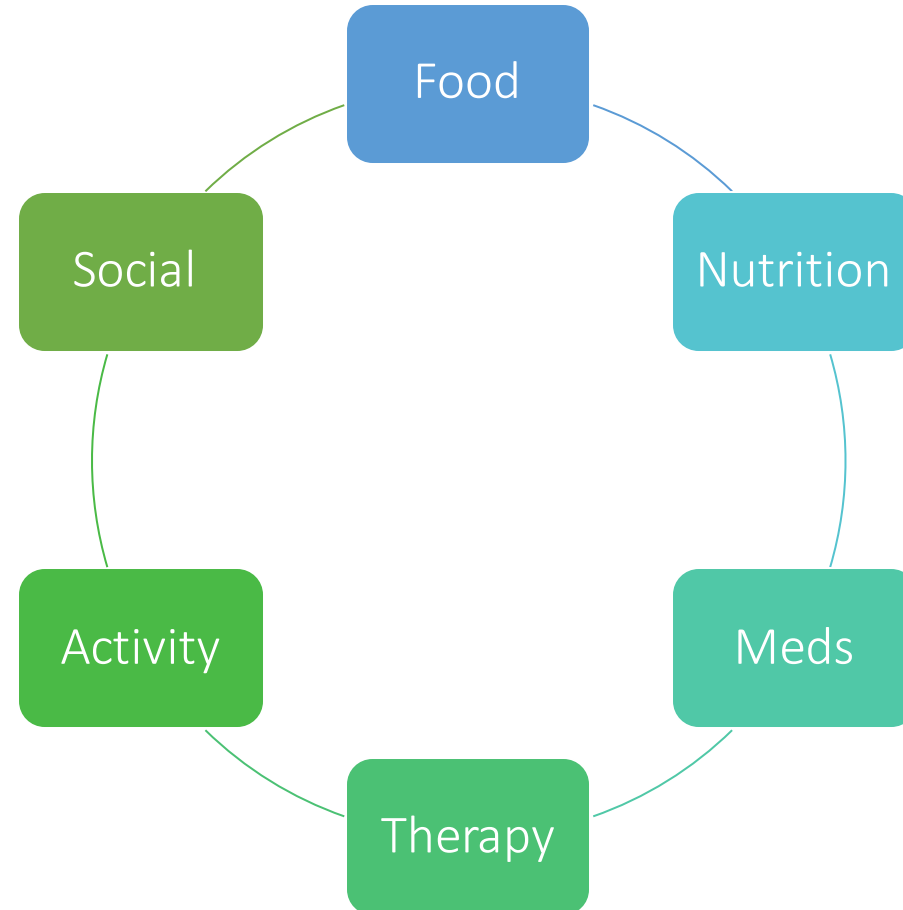
Key nutrients and foods  
for better mental health

The role of the  
microbiome

Next steps

Outline

# Framework for nutrition and mental health





# Fruits and vegetables

- Especially raw
- Fill half your plate
- Smoothies and soups
- Use frozen fruit and veggies
- Beets, carrots, apples, cabbage, potatoes and sweet potatoes are good value – but heavy!





# The role of the microbiome

01

We have about 100 trillion microbes in our gut, including good and bad bacteria

02

Good bacteria and a healthy microbiome helps our immune system, and can boost our mood too

03

We want to feed the good bacteria!  
They eat fibre

04

Sleep, exercise and social contact are also important

# Choose prebiotic foods

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- Garlic
- Asparagus
- Jerusalem artichoke
- Barley
- Oats
- Banana
- Flaxseeds
- Apples



# Choose probiotic foods

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- Vegan Kimchi
- Kombucha
- Saurkraut
- Dill pickles
- Tempeh
- Miso
- Sourdough bread





# Choose foods rich in magnesium

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- Pumpkin Seeds: 1 oz = 18%
- Almonds: 1 oz = 19%
- Spinach (steamed): 1 cup = 39%
- Cashews: 28 g = 18%
- Peanuts: 28g = 16%
- Black Beans: 1 cup = 30%
- Edamame: 1 cup = 18%
- Dark Chocolate (70%+): 1 bar = 58%
- Avocado: 1 whole = 15%
- Quinoa (cooked): 1 cup = 30%
- Oatmeal (cooked): 1 cup = 15%

List adapted from [simplyquinoa.com](http://simplyquinoa.com)



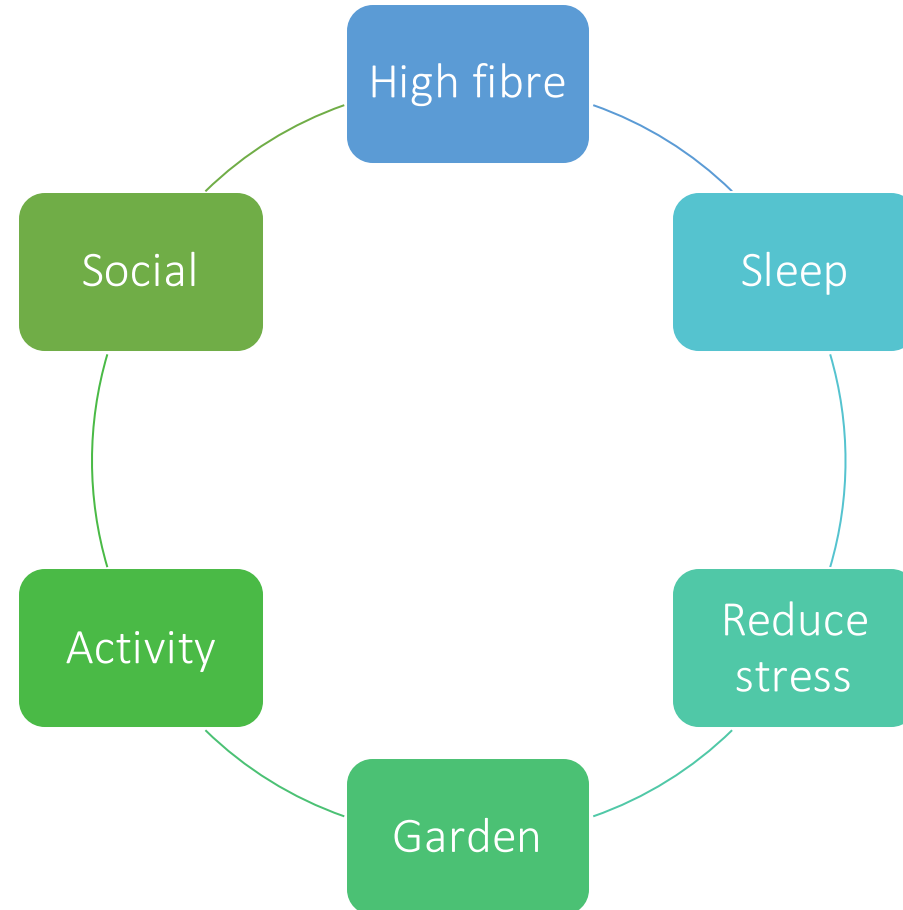
A photograph of two elderly individuals walking away from the camera on a city street. The person on the left is a man wearing a light blue short-sleeved shirt and dark trousers, carrying a black backpack. The person on the right is a woman with short white hair, wearing a colorful floral patterned shirt and tan pants, also carrying a black backpack. The background shows a blurred city street with buildings and a crosswalk.

## Supplements to consider: vit D and omega-3

- Plant-based options are available!



# Building a stronger microbiome



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## Next steps

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- Seek help if you need to
- Therapy
- Medication
- Healthy eating
- Healthy social environment

