



# Geary County

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

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May 2021

## Ask the Agent

**Q:** I'm not sure if I am just overly exhausted or if I have other issues going on that are causing my absentmindedness. How do I know if my mental health is the cause?

**A:** I am not a mental health professional so I cannot give you any specific guidance. However, there are many resources available to help you get an idea on the status of your mental health. One of those resources is an online screening tool hosted on the Mental Health America website at: [mhascreeing.org](http://mhascreeing.org). As always, your physician should be informed of your concerns and may want to see you for an appointment.

For more information call the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at: **785-238-4161**

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## How Are You?

May 2021

In America, it is common to pass someone you know and casually ask "How Are You", but rarely do you get a truthful answer. Instead, perfunctory replies include "fine", "good", "okay" or even "living the dream." The truth is more likely "It's been a rough week," "I'm trying to hang in there but it's been hard," or simply "I don't know."

Listening to one of my favorite radio stations, I heard a song called "The Truth Be Told" by Matthew West that lays bare the truth behind these casual exchanges:



*"Lie number 1 you're supposed to have it all together  
And when they ask how you're doing  
Just smile and tell them, "Never better"*

*Lie number 2 everybody's life is perfect except yours  
So keep your messes and your wounds  
And your secrets safe with you behind closed doors*

*Truth be told; the truth is rarely told..."*

If these words resonate with your own self-reflection, know that **You Are Not Alone**—the message of May as National Mental Health Awareness Month. With a focus on the healing value of connecting in safe ways, the National Alliance on Mental Illness and related partners will communicate that "It's okay to not be okay." Together, through education and awareness, the goal is to have a "shared vision of a nation where

*anyone affected by mental illness can get the appropriate support and quality of care to live healthy, fulfilling lives—a nation where no one feels alone in their struggle."*

The need for mental health awareness has been amplified by the deep and significant ways COVID19 has impacted the lives of every human being. The Kaiser Family Foundation reports a notable upward trend of adults reporting symptoms of Anxiety and Depressive Disorder, peaking at 41.5% during Phase 3 in mid-December. This same trend has been noted in children as a direct result of the social isolation and loneliness that had been a bi-product of the COVID19 health protocols that were needed. Results of a recent parent survey published in the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (Loades, ME 2020), indicated that about one third of children who were contained by enforced social isolation required mental health treatment.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), one in twenty adults experience serious mental illness, and 17% of youth aged 6-17 years experience a mental health disorder. Anxiety disorders comprise 19% of reported mental health cases followed by 8% diagnosed for depression and 4% of cases bearing a dual diagnosis (of both anxiety and depression.) The average delay between symptom onset and treatment is 11 years.

Perhaps it seems disheartening to consider these statistics, but they need to be reported and shared to increase public awareness, bust through the stigmas associated with mental health and advocate for better health care and support systems.

With the prevalence noted above of mental health conditions in adults and children, increasing knowledge and awareness is a strong first-step to letting our affected family member, neighbor, co-worker, classmate or friend know that they are not alone.

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# Family Nutrition



The quality of the food you eat can impact your overall physical and mental health. Eating nutritious foods can go a long way toward achieving a healthy lifestyle, so make every bite count.

## Diet and Mental Health

### Two Major Issues

#### Poor Diet

Unhealthy diets lead to major health problems like diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and cancer. Because of this, poor diet is the main cause of early death in developed countries. Nearly 20% of all deaths worldwide can be linked to unhealthy eating habits.

#### Mental Illness

At the same time, mental illnesses are the biggest cause of disability and illness in the world. Depression alone is one of the top five leading causes of disability across the planet.

### Better Diet, Better Mental Health

A healthy diet includes a full range of vegetables, fruits, legumes (lentils, chickpeas, beans), fish, whole grains (rice, quinoa, oats, breads, etc.), nuts, avocados and olive oil to support a healthy brain. Sweet and fatty foods should be special treats, not the staples of your diet.

People who eat a diet high in whole foods such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, legumes, fish and unsaturated fats (like olive oil) are up to 35% less likely to develop depression than people who eat less of these foods.

Highly processed, fried and sugary foods have little nutritional value and should be avoided. Research shows that a diet that regularly includes these kinds of foods can increase the risk of developing depression by as much as 60%.

### Children and Adolescents

Good nutrition starts in the womb. The children of women who eat diets high in processed, fried and sugary foods during pregnancy have more emotional problems in childhood. Similarly, diets low in whole, nutrient-dense foods and diets higher in junk and processed foods during the first years of life are linked to more emotional problems in children.

### Food Can Change Your Brain

Diet is linked to the hippocampus, a key area of the brain involved in learning, memory, and mental health. People with healthy diets have more hippocampal volume than those with unhealthy diets.

- Eating more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, fish, olive oil, and other healthy foods while eating less unhealthy junk and processed foods can be an effective treatment strategy for depression
- **One study found that 1/3 of participants with depression experienced full relief of their symptoms after improving their diet.** The more people improved their diets, the more their depression improved.

### Healthy Diet Doesn't Have to Be Expensive

A healthy diet can actually be cheaper than junk and processed food. Save money by choosing canned or frozen

vegetables, and dried fruits and beans. These are nutritionally similar to fresh foods, stay good longer, and are usually less expensive!

### Nutrients to Keep in Mind

#### Omega 3 Fatty Acids

- Omega 3 fatty acids are essential to brain health and reduce inflammation and risk of heart disease.
- Oily fish like salmon, trout, mackerel, anchovies and sardines are the most highly recommended sources of Omega 3 fatty acids, and the American Heart Association suggests eating these types of fish at least twice a week. Omega 3s can also be found in albacore tuna, walnuts, flax seeds, chia seeds, and dark green leafy vegetables like brussels sprouts, kale and spinach.
- People who eat diets rich with Omega 3 fatty acids have up to a 30% reduced risk of depression.
- Fish oil supplements that are high in the EPA type of Omega 3 fatty acids can help mental health. Studies show they can benefit some people with depression as much as anti-depressants.

#### B Group Vitamins

- B-group vitamins help to regulate neurotransmitters, immune function, and amino acids – the building blocks of proteins in the body.
- Folate and folic acid are part of the B family of vitamins and can be found in green leafy vegetables, legumes, and whole grains.
- People who eat foods rich in folate have a lower risk of depression.
- Fish (salmon, trout, tuna), beef, lamb, clams, poultry (chicken and turkey), eggs, and milk are natural sources of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>. Breakfast cereals with vitamin B<sub>12</sub> added are a good option for vegetarians.
- People with a lack of vitamin B<sub>12</sub> may be at increased risk for depression, especially if they are older.

#### Vitamin D

- Vitamin D is important for optimal brain functioning, including mood and critical thinking.
- Fatty fish like salmon and tuna have the most naturally occurring vitamin D. Some vitamin D can also be found in eggs, other dairy foods, and fortified beverages and breakfast cereals. Cod liver oil supplements are high in vitamins A and D and have some omega 3 fatty acids as well.
- Sunlight is a major source of vitamin D. Five to thirty minutes of sun exposure twice a week generally produces enough vitamin D in the body. Lighter-skinned people require less time in the sun than those with darker skin.
- Low levels of vitamin D are linked to depression, in particular seasonal depression, which happens with reduced sunlight during winter.

Foster, Ashley. "Mental Health Month: Diet and Nutrition." *Navigating Life's Journey Blog*, Division of Agriculture Research and Extension, University of Arkansas, 1 May 2018, [www.uaex.edu/life-skills-wellness/personal-family-well-being/navigating-life-blog/posts/self/mental\\_health\\_month\\_diet\\_and\\_nutrition.aspx](http://www.uaex.edu/life-skills-wellness/personal-family-well-being/navigating-life-blog/posts/self/mental_health_month_diet_and_nutrition.aspx).

**Geary County**

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**Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs**

**\*\*Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register\*\***

**May, 2021**

- 5-26 Create Better Health— Join us every Wednesday from 4-5pm! Classes will be held on Zoom and are FREE if you and your family qualify for FDPIR, Free and Reduced Lunch Program, Head Start, Medicaid/Kancare, SNAP, TANF, TEFAP, or WIC. If you would like to work on creating better health habits for yourself in 2021, contact Courtney Angelo and Ann Katt at [snap-edgegearycounty@ksu.edu](mailto:snap-edgegearycounty@ksu.edu).
- 6-27 Wallet Wisdom—Focus on Your Finances online series every Thursday from noon—1:00pm. More details and registration is available online at [bit.ly/walletwisdom2021](https://bit.ly/walletwisdom2021).
- 22 Walk Kansas Geary County—Program concludes May 22

**June, 2021**

- 2 Open Class Superintendent meeting 10AM—location TBD. We are in need of a Superintendent for Textiles & Fiber Arts. Call the Extension office if you would like to volunteer!
- 9 Eat Smart Moving More—online classes co-sponsored by the Dorothy Bramlage Public Library. Make positive changes for your health and how to cook nutritious meals on a budget. Contact Courtney Angelo or Ann Katt for more information or to register at [snap-edgegearycounty@ksu.edu](mailto:snap-edgegearycounty@ksu.edu).

**July, 2021**

- 18-22 MARK YOUR CALENDAR: Geary County Free Fair (including Open Class) is back!



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