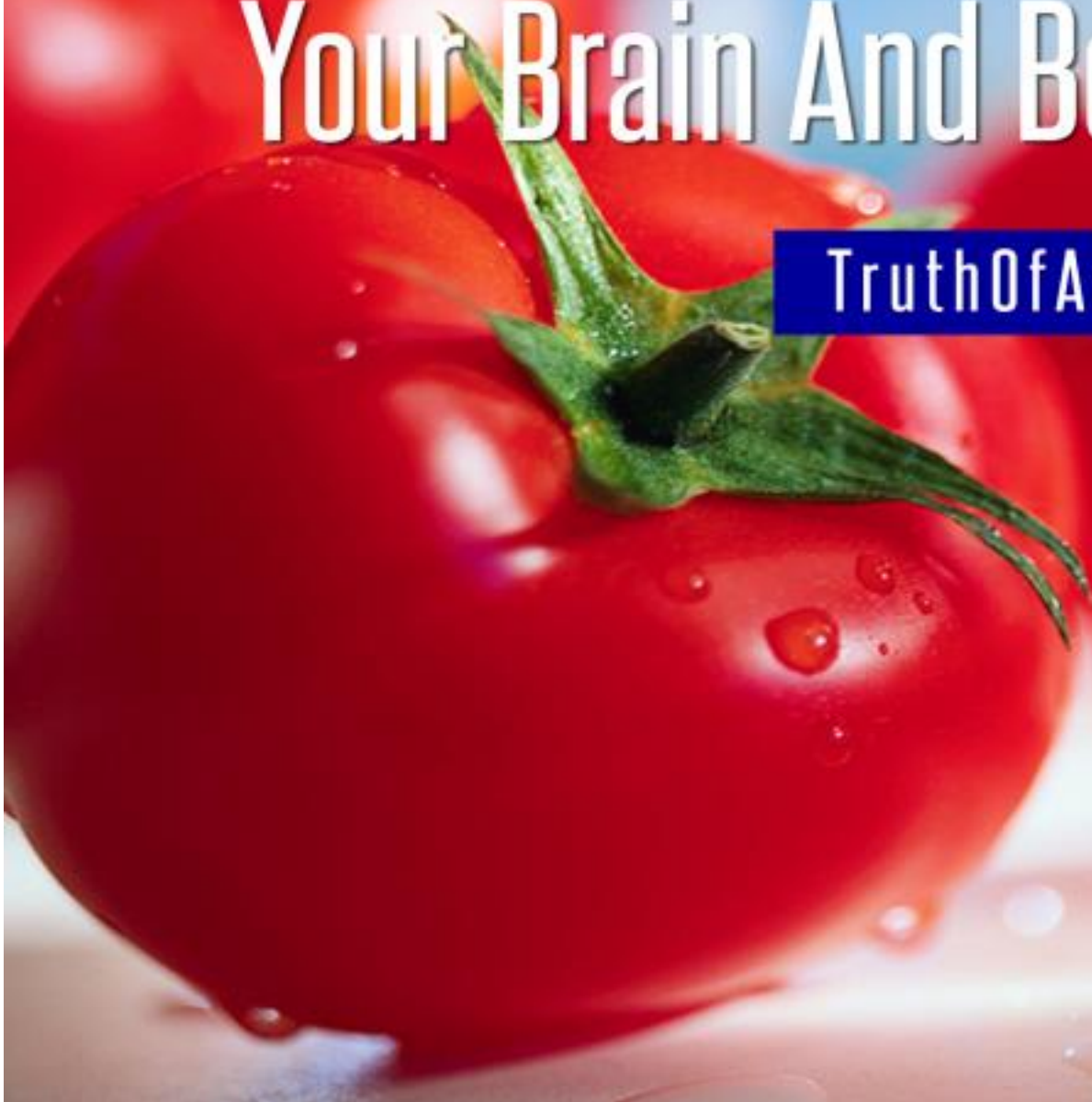


NUTRITION FOR IMPROVED RECOVERY

Nutrients That Restore
Your Brain And Body

TruthOfAddiction.com

A. Scott Roberts



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By A. Scott Roberts

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Why Nutrition In Recovery?

In the past, addicts have been thought of as being weak-willed or morally wrong. However, research indicates that addiction causes biochemical changes that may alter the function and structure of the brain.¹ Biochemical imbalances, nutrition deficiencies and digestive problems appear to be caused by addiction, as well as aggravated by it.

People that have addictions to drugs or alcohol, usually develop glandular weaknesses that are quite severe. Nutritional deficiencies are very common

as well. It usually takes several months to repair glands and build an addict's nutritional reserves. When starting a recovery program, it is important to consider having a good nutrition intake and better metabolic support.

The reason addicts often have nutritional deficiencies is because they often don't eat properly. Often addicts spend much of their time obtaining their drug of choice and exhausting their money, time and resources to obtain their drug of choice.

During recovery, alcohol and drug addicts may discover that they are malnourished. Alcohol, for example, has a lot of calories. In fact, only fat contains more calories – per gram.

Alcohol drinkers usually feel full after drinking even if they hardly ate at all. These are empty calories that lead to malnutrition and a poor eating habits. Using a good nutritional diet will help someone who is recovering to feel better physically and mentally.

It is common to find addicts having deficiencies in key vitamins, minerals, proteins and fats. They may also be unable to digest carbohydrates efficiently.

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These digestive problems, food sensitivities/allergies and improper adrenal gland function are caused by biochemical and physical changes from addiction.²

In one interesting study, animals were placed in a cage with 2 bowls, one filled with water and one filled with alcohol. Researchers found that when the animals were healthy, they chose to drink from the water bowl. But when the animals lacked certain nutrients they chose alcohol over the water.

These tests were repeated several times and revealed the same results.³ In fact, the researchers were able to shift the consumption of alcohol based on deliberate increase or decrease of vitamins to their diet!⁴

Nutrition Problems Caused from Addiction

According to Finnegan (1989), most addicts suffer from nutritional, digestive

and metabolic problems. Addicts may lack essential amino acids, vitamins and minerals that are very important to proper brain and body function. This may also contribute to digestive problems such as the inability to absorb essential nutrients and may increase yeast growth.⁵

Low blood sugar has been shown to contribute to emotional states such as depression, anxiety and panic. These emotional states caused by malnutrition and deficient nutrients can lead an addict to use.⁶

Research indicates that many 12 step recovery programs have a very low success rate (less than 25%). This may be because psychological and physical and nutritional aspects of addiction may not be taken into consideration.⁷ A holistic approach seems most effective.

Some lesser known recovery programs that include nutrition have been found

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boost success. In fact, documented holistic approaches that focus on nutrition show a 92% success rate!⁸ Another study reported a 70% success rate when a nutritional program was used.⁹

The research seems clear. Nutrition can correct the biochemical imbalances caused by addiction as well as the nutritional deficiencies and digestive problems. Nutrition also improves emotions, mental clarity and mood.¹⁰

Neurons,

Neurotransmitters & Nutrition

Neurons are constantly working in the brain. They work while we're asleep and when we're awake. Neurons are responsible for a lot of activity in the brain and because of this, they require nearly two times the amount of energy and fuel than other cells within the human body.¹¹

Neurons get their fuel from glucose (blood sugar). Which the body produces from foods and carbohydrates. Neurons do not store glucose, so they constantly need a steady supply of it in order to function properly.

For those that are addicted to drugs or alcohol often feel a need for glucose and it is typically met through processed food, snacks, soda, sugar, caffeine or

nicotine.

Consuming too many of these artificial snacks results in increased fluctuations of glucose levels which leads to imbalanced brain functioning, adrenal fatigue or hypoglycemia.¹²

Neurotransmitters are manufactured by the things you eat. Most addicts have insufficient nutrients that contributes to the imbalance in the brain.

Neurotransmitters in an addicts brain may become malfunctioning or

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inadequate. This leads the addict to seek drugs, alcohol, caffeine, tobacco or high refined sugar to “feel better.”

Research has shown that the brain's neurons will begin to function properly once the addict is able to discontinue the use of these substances and get the “right” nutrients.

When the brain is getting signals to consume alcohol, drugs, tobacco or sugary foods, the brain will try to open up more receptors (known as upregulate), or shut down receptors (downregulate) in order to compensate for the imbalance in the brain.

These actions from the brain can be manifested physically in the body though joint pains, headaches, diarrhea or flu-like symptoms. These symptoms are all too common with addicts in recovery and those experiencing the pain of withdrawal.

Commonly, addicts often seek sugary and processed foods that are highly refined. These foods release serotonin, a neurotransmitter in the brain, which makes the addict feel relaxed after eating them.¹³

Endorphins

Nutrients can impact your endorphin levels. When your endorphin levels are low, you may feel stressed, depressed and impulsive. You may also crave sugar. It has been shown that many recovering addicts crave sugar and highly processed foods when their endorphin level is low.

When addiction depletes the endorphin level in the brain, the addict often has less immune system functioning because endorphin receptors are 90 percent of our immune system. With this imbalance the addict becomes extremely vulnerable to viruses, bacteria or autoimmune disease.¹⁴

GABA

GABA (Gamma-Aminobutyric Acid) is another brain chemical that calms racing thoughts that have been shown to be depleted in individuals who use relaxants such as Xanax or Valium. GABA imbalances lead to anxiety, stress and panic attacks.¹⁵

Adrenal Fatigue & Food Sensitivities

Consuming sugary or highly-refined foods like donuts, soda, white bread or alcohol, can spike blood sugar dramatically. This causes the pancreas to produce too much insulin and then causes the body and brain to be starved of glucose.¹⁶

Adrenal fatigue is common among addicts. Adrenal glands are regulators and affect how you feel. Proper adrenal gland functioning has been shown to depend largely on what you eat.¹⁷

Allergies and food sensitivities have been shown to be caused from addiction as it disrupts proper digestive functioning. In fact, some allergies have been linked

with greater violence¹⁸ and attention deficit disorder.¹⁹

One study from the Health Recovery Center in California revealed that

clients who were sensitive to pollutants at their job, such as ethanol, paint, plastics, lotions or cleaners showed greater fatigue, mental confusion, exhaustion, depression and cravings. They were also more susceptible to alcoholism!²⁰

The body must get the required nutrients such as vitamins, essential fatty acids and minerals so that it can function normally. Research indicates that a lack of even a single mineral or vitamin can cause a metabolic imbalance which can create addictive cravings.²¹

Nutrition Decreases Problem Behavior?

One researcher, Dr Stephen Schoenthaler, studied the affects of vitamins that were administered to inmates over the length of 29 years. His findings reveal that individuals who received the vitamin supplement had a 38% decrease in behavior problems.²² He concluded that a low concentration of essential nutrients in the body inhibits the brain to function properly.

Another study from Dr. Bernard Gesch, found that improving young offenders diets there was a 25 percent reduction in criminal offenses.²³ In another study, the behavior of inmates was reduced by the intake of proper vitamins and minerals.²⁴

Charles Grant, M.D., gave certain nutrients to his patients with addictions and he discovered that proper nutrients added to their diet decreased addictive behaviors 83%. He concluded that proper nutrition restored biochemical imbalances in the brain.²⁵

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Some research indicates that over 80% of people on probation who participated in a nutrition program, led crime-free lives.²⁶

Nutrition Planning

It is important to restore an addict to physical health by changing destructive behaviors into more positive ones. Having good nutrition, exercise and using relaxation techniques are important for a lasting change. Addicts need foods that have nutrients to restore proper functioning of various systems within their bodies.

According to research, diets that are high in carbohydrates and protein is beneficial. Food can affect mood and the deficiency of nutrients like folic acid or B-complex vitamins can negatively affect recovery.²⁷

Amino Acids

Chemical substances, such as alcohol, impairs digestion and affects the processing of amino acids.²⁸ Because of this, you should eat more protein and amino acids while recovering. Addictions to drugs or alcohol impact the liver and small intestine which inhibits the liver, resulting in less protein secretions.

It takes every 4 days for the blood platelets and gastrointestinal tract to regenerate and 10 days for white blood cells to be replaced. This process requires amino acids.²⁹

There are over 100 studies at MIT and Harvard that have confirmed that using amino acids to increase neurotransmitters in subjects led to eliminating depression, cravings, anxiety and stress.³⁰

Alcohol

and drugs can prevent the body from processing two amino acids,

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tryptophan and tyrosine- which are responsible for the production of the neurotransmitters: dopamine, serotonin and norepinephrine. These neurotransmitters assist emotional well-being and mental clarity. When these neurotransmitters are depleted, behavior and mood are affected.

Tryptophan is important in the production of the neurotransmitter serotonin. Serotonin is important to sleep and has a certain calming effect. This amino acid is found in milk, turkey, sunflower seeds and bananas.

Tyrosine is a precursor of dopamine and norepinephrine. Tyrosine is found in protein-rich foods like meat, seafood, poultry or tofu.³¹

Meals should be consumed at equal intervals throughout the day.

Carbohydrates and sugars are very addictive, and can cause a problem for those who are trying to recover from alcohol and drug addiction. An addict will often consume too many simple carbohydrates and become deficient in complex carbohydrates.³²

Many doctors and researchers have found that recovery is enhanced when using good nutrition. In one study, patients that recieved treatment for drug and alcohol addiction were matched by controls (non-treatment group). One group received a nutritional program while the other received regular treatment.

Within 6 months of discharge, a total of 81% within the nutritional group maintained their sobriety, while only 33% of patients (control group) without nutrition were able to stay sober.³³

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Addicts may initially require more vitamins, minerals, Omega 3 fatty acids and protein then non-addicts. This is because some addicts may have an inability to process simple carbohydrates correctly.

Complex carbohydrates are found in beans, proteins and grains and may need to be taken in ample amounts.

Good sources of proteins include meat, fish, chicken, beans, eggs, nuts, seeds and cheese.

Our bodies need both unsaturated and saturated fats. The best source of these fats are found in dairy products, meats, butter, eggs and fowl. While it is not good to have excessive amounts of cholesterol, a minimum amount (around 20% to 30%) is needed to enhance and build major body organs such as the liver. This also helps to strengthen cells as and improve absorption of calcium for bone health.

Cholesterol from saturated fats also have been shown to regulate emotions and mood because it impacts the serotonin receptors within the brain.³⁴

Unsaturated fats are usually made up of Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids. These fatty acids produce heat and energy in our body as well as produce hormone like substances called prostaglandins, that help regulate the immune system and nervous system.³⁵

Doctors have used Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids in recovery programs and have noted that it improved recovery.³⁶

Flaxseed oil is a good source of the Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids.

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can be directly poured onto salads, vegetables, soups or grains. Adults are recommended to take 1 to 3 teaspoons daily. You can receive the adequate amount of Omega 3 fatty acid if you eat fresh fatty fish several times a week.³⁷

You would want to get the best source of unrefined oils that are properly produced. These sources include: Omega Nutrition, Flora Inc and Arrowhead Mills/OmegaFlo. When shopping for oils, stay away from oils that are “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated.”

Margarine is usually not a good choice either. Cold pressed oils are best as they have been extracted by pressure, not heating, which destroys nutrients. Butter, olive oil or coconut oil are higher-quality fats.³⁸

Instead of eating fast food or candy when you need a snack. Plan to have some balanced meals that include complex carbohydrates, fresh vegetables, protein and quality fats. Snacking during the day will help keep your blood level stable as well.

Processed Foods, Additives and Pesticides

It is best to eat locally-grown vegetables and fruit that is in season. Research repeatedly tells us that vegetables and fruits that have become fully ripened on a vine or tree before consumption has more nutritional value than those that ripen at the supermarket. One study found that tomatoes that were ripened on the vine had over twice the amount of Vitamin C - compared to tomatoes that were machine picked.³⁹

The best way to find good fruits and vegetables are in local farmers markets. Local farmers markets usually have fruits and vegetables in season. Look for

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the fruits and vegetables that are colorful, because they usually have the greatest amount of nutrients.⁴⁰

Canned food and processed food miss many nutritional elements that are essential during recovery. Processed foods may be stripped of nearly 90 percent of nutrients.⁴¹

Some research indicates that addictions are harder to manage when you are eating “junk food” and may actually put yourself at greater risk for relapse.⁴²

Additives found in processed food have been shown to cause changes in the brain that may cause learning difficulties or hyperactivity.⁴³ Aspartame, for example, can block serotonin synthesis.⁴³

Additives such as MSG, phenylethylamine, tyramine and xanthines are commonly found in processed meats, chips, sauces, chocolates, soft drinks or caffeine have been shown to cause mania, problems with attention and decrease problem-solving ability.⁴⁴

Those in recovery often turn to caffeine to boost their mood. Many support groups and 12 step meetings actually provide coffee. However, caffeine is simply another drug that can cause a chemical imbalance as well. It stimulates adrenal glands which can eventually lead to adrenal exhaustion manifested in symptoms such as lightheadedness, dizziness or fatigue.

Going Out To Eat?

If you go out to eat, avoid fried foods. Most chicken and other meats (other than lamb) will contain hormones and antibiotics. Some restaurants will have fresh meats. Request broiled or baked meats instead with a side of rice or potato and fresh vegetables or salad.

Even just rice with a potato and some vegetables should be sufficient for the evening meal. If you can, skip the dessert. Most desserts are flour and refined sugar which, for some, are hard to digest and can cause a rapid change in your blood sugar levels as well as putting stress on the liver and pancreas.

Shopping List for Addiction Recovery:

Juice - Choose 100% fruit juice that comes from fresh fruit. It will have more nutrition than the processed fruit juice and other fruit drinks.

Produce - Frozen produce is a healthier choice because freezing food locks in the nutrients before preservatives or food coloring is added.

Meat - Most fat in chicken is within the skin and the breading of the fried chicken is usually loaded with unhealthy carbs. Choosing white meat is usually a better choice.

Bread – Typically, whole wheat bread has more vitamin E, B6, folic acid, zinc, magnesium and more fiber than white bread.

Dairy – Choosing 1 or 2 percent milk over whole milk will have less fat. Egg Beaters usually have lower cholesterol. Choosing low fat cheese is also a better option.

Oils and Fats - Monosaturated fats would be better than saturated fats. Saturated fats are in dairy products, meats, coconut and palm oils. Monosaturated fats are in peanut oil, olive oil and canola oils.

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Snacks

Having just three nutritious meals each day may not be sufficient. Having healthy snacks between meals may greatly improve an addict's nutritional needs. Having snacks between meals may even decrease mood swings. It can be a good thing to snack between meals if they are nutritious.

Snacks you should choose more often:

100% Fruit Juice

Crackers

Cheese

Fresh Fruit

Raw vegetables

Raisins (or other dried fruit)

Yogurt (low fat)

Pretzels

Canned fruit that is packed in juice.

Snacks you should choose less often:

Corn Chips

Potato Chips

Canned Fruit In Syrup

Ice Cream

Cake

Donuts

Fruit Punch

Pastries

Brownies

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Fruit Juice

Fresh celery, carrot and beet juice are very good for the liver and help to build blood. They are full of assimilable vitamins, enzymes and minerals. These juices can improve immune system function as well as correct adrenal problems.

Note: people that may have yeast overgrowth or those with hypoglycemia may want to avoid these juices.

Take 8 to 12 ounces daily. It is best to get the juice from organic and pesticide free vegetables. A great mixture is 10 percent beet, 60 percent carrot and 30 percent celery juice. Some like a little parsley added as well. Beet juice is a great liver cleanser and can cause a detox reaction in some people. Make sure you drink a lot of water and dilute your juice with 50 percent water if you have a blood-sugar issue.

Just eating healthy may not be enough for individuals to replenish severely depleted nutrients. One study in particular indicated that B-vitamin was given to recovering alcoholics and they were unable to absorb it. All of it was flushed out through their urine. It took roughly 10 weeks for the patients to

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