Nutrition Bites

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This delicious dish is prepared with lentils, rice, and various spices. It is a savory porridge-type dish, with a thick, creamy texture.

Newsletter Content is adapted from the following resources:

1. https://www.dietitians.ca/getattachment/Events/Nutrition-Month/Nutrition-Month-Planning-Guide-(1).pdf.aspx?lang=en-CA
2. https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/
3. https://www.plefa.com/article/S0952-3278(25)00001-8/fulltext
4. https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/20/6/5171
5. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1028415X.2021.2020403

Community Nutrition Newsletter

Nutrition Month 2026: Nourish to Flourish

This March, we're keeping the momentum going with last year's Nutrition Month theme of "Nourish to Flourish," highlighting how dietitians support health at individual and community levels. From managing ongoing health conditions to supporting families and communities, food shapes how we live, connect, and care for others and ourselves. Here is how to engage with food this Nutrition Month:

Learn how food supports health and disease management: Dietitians support individuals living with chronic conditions and complex health concerns by providing personalized, evidence-based nutrition guidance. Learning how food choices can support energy levels, blood sugar control, heart health, and digestion can help people feel more confident and empowered in managing their health every day. Be sure to use reliable sources to obtain information, such as Health Canada, Alberta Health Services, and Canada's Food Guide.

Build positive relationships with food: Developing a healthy relationship with food is about balance, flexibility, and enjoyment. This may include learning to listen to hunger and fullness cues, enjoying a variety of foods, and creating supportive mealtime routines. You may identify barriers that prevent healthy eating, and then create specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic goals. Try planning by preparing healthy meals and snacks on the weekend to support the week ahead.

Connecting through culture and community: Food connects us to our traditions, cultures, and the people around us. You may choose to prepare and share cultural meals with neighbours, which can strengthen relationships and foster a sense of belonging. The Rexdale Community Health Centre hosts a variety of cultural events that help build connections, introduce you to new cultures, and offer a space to share and celebrate your own traditions with others.

This Nutrition Month invites us to reflect on how food can support much more than physical health. Nourishing yourself can strengthen connections, support balance, and help individuals and communities flourish.

Recipe: Tomato and Spinach Kitchari

Makes: 4 servings

Ingredients: 130g (3/4 cup) basmati rice, 200g (1 cup) split red lentils, 3 tbsp. olive oil, 1 sliced onion, 1 tbsp. grated ginger, 2 crushed garlic cloves, 2 tsp turmeric, 2 tsp ground coriander, 2 tsp cumin seeds, 1-2 tsp chilli powder, 1.2L (5 cups) vegetable stock, 150g (1 cup) cherry tomatoes, 200g (7-8 cups) spinach, 1 chopped red chilli.

Directions:

1. Rinse rice and lentils thoroughly under cold, running water.
2. Heat 1 tbsp. olive oil in a large saucepan. Add the onion with a pinch of salt and fry at medium-high heat until golden, about 5 minutes.
3. Add ginger, garlic, turmeric, ground coriander, half the cumin seeds, and chilli powder and fry for 1 minute.
4. Add rice and lentils to the pan and pour in the vegetable stock. Bring it to a simmer and then cover, turn heat down to medium and let cook for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally, until lentils are creamy.
5. Add tomatoes and spinach and cook for 5 minutes.
6. Heat remaining oil in another small pan and add remaining cumin seeds, cook for 1 minute. Drizzle cumin oil over the lentils and top with the chilli.

Serve with warm chapattis if you like. You can refrigerate for up to 2 or 3 days of freeze for up to 2 weeks.
https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/tomato-spinach-kitchari

Mental Health and Nutrition

Nutrition and mental health are closely connected, with each influencing the other. What we eat can affect our mental well-being, while mental health can shape food choices and access to nutritious foods. A few key nutrients to support mental health are as follows:

Healthy Fats (Omega-3's): These fats help our brain grow, support blood flow, and help our learning, memory, and thinking. There are three types of Omega-3 fats, ALA, EPA, and DHA. We need a variety of all three to reduce inflammation, enhance neurotransmitter function, and ultimately improve brain health.

Protein: Foods high in protein have essential amino acids. These help our brain make chemicals that affect our mood, focus, and sleep. They are known as "feel-good" chemicals like serotonin and dopamine. If we do not eat enough protein, we lower these chemicals, which affects our mood and sleep. The daily requirement for adults is 0.8g of protein per kilogram of body weight.

Fibre: Gut health and brain health are linked. Fibre feeds the good bacteria in our gut, which supports our digestion, immunity, and brain function. Our healthy gut bacteria break down the food we eat, and this is used to create the "feel-good" chemicals that influence our mood, focus, and sleep. Adult men require 38g of fibre per day, and adult women require 25g per day.

Meaningful Eating: This supports strong connections, emotional well-being, and reduces loneliness. This may be by eating meals together with family or friends, eating outside or near a window, playing soft music or lighting a candle, using your favourite cutlery, and enjoying the smells, colours, and textures of your food.

Nutrition is an important but often overlooked component of emotional and mental health, and many people are unaware of how diet affects mood, anxiety, and brain function. You may discuss nutrient levels and dietary options with a dietitian or healthcare provider to ensure you are meeting your requirements. Just as nutrition is essential for heart health or physical performance, it also plays a key role in maintaining a healthy brain.

Make sure you eat a variety of foods in your diet.

Omega-3 Fats Food Sources:

- ALA sources: mainly plant-foods such as nuts, seeds, and vegetable oils.
- EPA and DHA sources: fatty fish such as trout, salmon, mackerel, and skipjack tuna.
- Other sources: eggs, dairy, and yogurt.

Protein Food Sources:

- Animal sources: meats, poultry, seafood, and dairy products.
- Plant sources: legumes (beans, lentils, chickpeas), soy products, and nuts and seeds.

Fibre Food Sources:

- Vegetables
- Fruits (with the skin)
- Legumes (beans, lentils, etc.)
- Nuts and seeds
- Whole Grains

Many of these foods overlap. For instance, a salad with leafy greens, black beans, canned skipjack tuna, and seeds as a topping includes all the required nutrients.

Upcoming Program and Events

Weekly in person
Prenatal Nutrition Program
Tuesday at 10 a.m.
At 222 Dixon
Wednesday at 10 a.m. and Thusday at 10 a.m. At 21 Panorama Crt
Monthly Spanish Senior group teleconference

DID YOU KNOW…? FACTS?
-95% of the body's serotonin is produced in the intestine, which directly connects diet to mental health!
-Adding 5 grams of fibre per day can lower the risk of depression by around 5%.

Call and book your appointment to see a Dietitian/Nutritionist today!
We cover a wide range of conditions including: Healthy Eating – Cholesterol – Low Iron – Weight Loss/Gain – Celiac Disease – Kidney Stones – Picky Eaters – Sports Nutrition – Vegetarianism – Osteoperosis and more……

You don't need to have a Doctor's referral !

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