

Ask Leyla: Can dietary changes help improve my anxiety?



Q: My husband suffers from generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). He has been on antidepressants for a long time but they don't seem to be helping. Are there any nutritional recommendations to support him?

A: Barring any emotional/psychological issues that can cause anxiety, there is a physiological basis for anxiety that can be helped with changes in diet. Unfortunately, a common side effect of antidepressants is anxiety and nervousness. How ironic.

Hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) can actually cause anxiety along with intense sweating, lightheadedness and even dizziness and palpitations. A thorough assessment of your husband's diet and symptoms would go a long way to reveal any unstable blood sugar issues.

While headache is a common complaint in those intolerant of monosodium glutamate, MSG can cause palpitations and anxiety in susceptible individuals. Prepared bouillions, yeast extracts, malt flavorings, caseinates and smoke flavorings among others, contain MSG—and should be avoided.

Intolerances to additives, preservatives, emulsifiers and artificial food colorings are known to cause reactions in many people—anxiety included.

Mitral valve prolapse can trigger feelings of anxiety. In a vicious cycle, MVP lowers magnesium levels and already low magnesium can trigger symptoms of MVP like chest pain, tightness and palpitations—causing anxiety. It is especially important in those with MVP to ensure stable blood sugar throughout the day to help diminish/control symptoms. (For more on MVP, check out Dr. Hoffman's book, *Natural Therapies for Mitral Valve Prolapse*)

Deficiencies of magnesium, B vitamins, zinc and healthy fats can cause anxiety and depression. Helpful supplements include L-theanine, P5P, inositol and fish oil. A qualified nutritionist can help identify which micronutrients require repletion and develop a program for success.

To your health!

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