

Food Safety and Hygiene

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Nutrition, Food Science and Technology

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Boosting Brain performance – Reducing risk of cognitive decline and Mental health challenges - Why dietary choices and nutritional supplements matter**Susan Kath**

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With our understanding of neuroplasticity, we are now presented with the opportunity to investigate the potential to modify and improve brain activity and function. Through the assessment of genes, epigenetic and metabolic markers, individualized treatment plans are being developed that are demonstrating reductions in cognitive decline, and improvements in neurological function. The development and progression of alzheimer's disease and dementia appears to be influenced by dietary choices, nutritional status, epigenetic and lifestyle behaviours. By focusing on modifying dietary intake and lifestyle to optimize health markers, rather than merely preventing disease, this may arrest and even reverse cognitive decline. Studies are also demonstrating reductions in symptoms such as depression, anxiety and schizophrenia through modifications in diet and addressing nutritional

deficiencies. Nutritional supplementation may also improve the efficacy of medication when required. Research is unveiling a strong symbiotic relationship between humanity and our microbiota and the importance of the gut brain axis and its intercommunication. Providing a dietary model that supports not only the optimization of our own health, but also that of the microbiota, may contribute to greater neurological health. Developing protocols that support and enable people to implement and comply to dietary and lifestyle changes are key to supporting improved health outcomes. My presentation will outline how modifications of dietary choices and key nutrients may assist in reducing neurological decline and supporting brain health.

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