



Happy Nutrition Month! This year's theme Nourish to Flourish is all about the connection between food and well-being. Take a read below to understand how what's on your plate can make a big difference in your physical, mental, and emotional health!

Nutrition for Physical Health

Good nutrition is important for health at every stage of life. Eating the right balance of foods provides the vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids, amino acids, and antioxidants our bodies need. These nutrients support growth and repair, physical health and performance, as well as disease prevention and management.

Adequate nutrition supports health across the lifespan - from pregnancy and infancy to adulthood and aging. It plays a key role in preventing malnutrition, strengthening the immune system, reducing risk of chronic diseases, and promoting longevity.

Nutrition for Mental Health

Nutrition may not be the first thing to come to mind when talking about mental health, but the foods we eat can play a huge role in preventing and managing a wide range of mental health conditions. The nutrients in our food have direct impacts on our brain, from helping to produce mood-regulating chemical messengers, to fighting oxidation and reducing inflammation. Interestingly, our

gut health is also hugely linked to these important functions. When we eat foods that support a healthy gut, the microbiome (aka the healthy bacteria in our gut) plays a huge role in supporting our brain health.

In research, good nutrition has been found to lower the risk of conditions like depression and Alzheimer's. It is also a key component for successful management of eating disorders, depressive and anxiety disorders, schizophrenia and other psychiatric disorders, and more.

Nutrition for Emotional Health

Food affects our emotions in complex ways. On one hand, our foods can help us maintain stable blood sugars, support mood-regulating chemical messengers, and provide comfort and satisfaction, all of which helps to support positive moods. On the other hand, a poor relationship with food and our bodies can potentially lead to negative emotions such as guilt and shame. It is important to build a healthy relationship with food, where we can eat mindfully with the intention to care for ourselves, whether physically, mentally or emotionally.



One Pot Barley and Vegetables

MAKES 4-6 SERVINGS

Ingredients:

1 tsp	Butter
1 cup	Pearl barley
3 cloves	Garlic, minced
2 cups	Milk
1 1/2 cups	No salt added vegetable broth
1/4 tsp	Each of salt and ground pepper
1 can (398mL)	Diced tomatoes
2 cups	Frozen green peas, thawed
1/3 cup	Sundried tomato pesto
1 can (540mL)	Chickpeas, drained and rinsed

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. In a Dutch oven (or any stove and oven safe pot), melt butter over medium-high heat. Add barley and garlic, cook for 2 minutes.
3. Stir in milk, broth, salt, pepper and tomatoes; bring to a boil. Cover and transfer to oven; bake for 30 minutes.
4. Uncover and bake for 5 more minutes or until barley is tender but firm.
5. Stir in peas, pesto and chickpeas.
6. Optional: Serve topped with cheese, green onions, chili flakes and a big squeeze of lemon.

Sources:

1. Recipe and image provided by Dairy Farmers of Canada. Retrieved from <https://dairynutrition.ca/en/educational-resources/one-pot-barley-and-vegetables>
2. Dietitians of Canada. Nutrition Month 2025 Physiological WellBeing Toolkit. Retrieved from <https://www.dietitians.ca/Advocacy/Nutrition-Month-2025/Nutrition-Month-2025-Physiological-toolkit>