



THE SILVERMIST GUIDE

TO NUTRITION IN RECOVERY



Table of Contents

4	How Addiction Can Lead to an Unhealthy Diet
6	The Impact of Alcohol and Drugs on Health
9	Good Nutrition During Withdrawal
11	How Good Nutrition Impacts Your Mood
14	Relieving Stress with Good Nutrition
16	Good Nutrition Helps Keep Cravings at Bay
18	Eating Right for a Good Night's Sleep
20	Help Repair Cell Damage with Antioxidants
22	Weight Management and Eating Disorders in Recovery
24	Diet Tips for Recovery



Just as poor nutrition can lead to serious, chronic health problems, eating a healthy diet can improve your physical health and increase your sense of well-being. Good nutrition plays an important role in recovery from any chronic disease, including diabetes, heart disease and addiction.

In this guide, we'll look at how addiction affects your eating habits and your health, and how eating a nutritious diet can improve your chances of successful recovery. We'll offer practical and actionable dietary solutions to many challenges you might face in recovery.



HOW ADDICTION

CAN LEAD TO AN UNHEALTHY DIET

The chronic abuse of alcohol or drugs can lead to unhealthy behaviors that include a sedentary lifestyle and poor sleeping and eating habits, which combine to put undue stress on the body. These unhealthy behaviors tend to lead to other poor lifestyle choices, including continued substance abuse and a lack of self-care, that affect every corner of your life.

Certain substances of abuse can affect the way you eat and how you think about food. For example, people who chronically abuse stimulants commonly forego eating meals and instead snack on sugary foods, and those who abuse alcohol may get as much as 50 percent of their calories from the sugar in the alcohol. The U.S. National Library of Medicine points out that people with an addiction often mistake hunger for drug cravings and may use more substances rather than eat.¹

Drugs and alcohol can inhibit the desire to take care of yourself, including preparing healthy meals that deliver vitamins and minerals that are critical for good health. An unhealthy diet makes recovery from a substance use disorder more difficult than it needs to be, and it contributes to relapse.

Healthy eating habits often need to be learned. Understanding how diet affects physical and mental health and how good nutrition can improve the function of your body's systems is the first step in making dietary changes that support a life in recovery.



THE IMPACT

OF ALCOHOL AND DRUGS ON HEALTH



Poor nutrition takes a toll on physical and mental health, causing potentially serious nutritional deficiencies that may lead to neurological problems, anemia, organ damage and reduced feelings of well-being.

Different drugs cause different health problems that can be addressed through improvements in diet.

Alcohol can cause diabetes, high blood pressure, severe malnutrition and organ damage. Alcohol abuse is a major cause of nutritional deficiency in the U.S., particularly including deficiencies in vitamins B1, B6 and folic acid. These deficiencies can cause anemia and problems with the nervous system. Alcohol also damages the liver and pancreas, which results in imbalances of calories, protein, electrolytes and fluids.



Opiates, such as codeine, oxycodone and heroin, affect the gastrointestinal system and may cause chronic constipation. During withdrawal, diarrhea and vomiting are common, and these can cause an imbalance of electrolytes and a depletion of nutrients.

Stimulants, including methamphetamine, Adderall and cocaine, reduce the appetite and can lead to severe weight loss and malnutrition. Dehydration is also common among those who abuse stimulants, and this can lead to an electrolyte imbalance, which may cause muscle aches, anxiety, headache, irregular heartbeat, and gastrointestinal problems.

Marijuana increases the appetite and often leads to snacking on sugary and fatty foods, which may cause weight gain and other health problems.

Recovering from an addiction is all about making choices that promote good health and feelings of well-being. The choices you make concerning the food you put in your body have far-reaching effects on your mood, sleeping habits and physical and mental health.

From the very beginning of your recovery journey, good nutrition should be a major focus to help promote other healthy lifestyle choices and improve the way you feel.



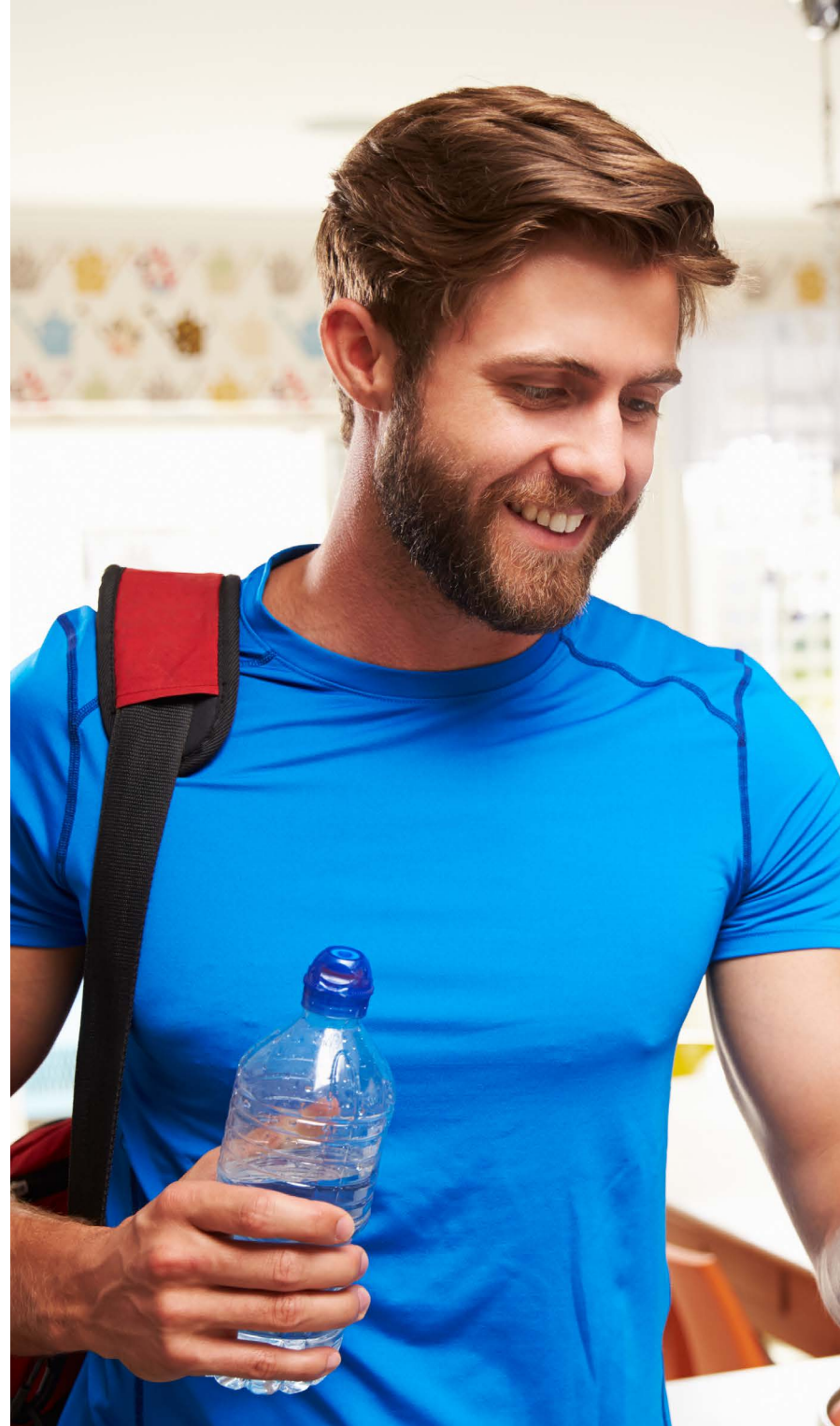
GOOD NUTRITION

DURING WITHDRAWAL

Detox is the first step in recovering from an addiction. During medical detox, which is supervised by medical and mental health professionals, particular attention is paid to nutrition. A healthy diet during withdrawal can help reduce the severity of withdrawal symptoms, alleviate anxiety and depression and restore the body's electrolyte balance for better functioning. Good nutrition helps to jumpstart the healing processes in the body to restore good overall health and a sense of well-being.

Complex carbohydrates and foods that are high in fiber are particularly beneficial during withdrawal.² They help reduce gastrointestinal discomfort and help you detox more quickly by promoting better liver function. Foods like oat and wheat bran, beans, peas, raspberries and squash are excellent complex carbohydrates that deliver a nutritional punch during detox.

Adequate hydration is essential during detox as well. Drinking plenty of filtered water helps to flush away toxins and promote optimum functioning of the body's systems, and green and white teas activate detoxification enzymes for more efficient cleansing, according to the National Cancer Institute.³



A young woman with long dark hair, wearing a teal top, is smiling and holding a fork with green salad. She is sitting at a table in a restaurant. In the background, two other people are visible, also smiling. The scene is bright and cheerful.

HOW GOOD NUTRITION IMPACTS YOUR MOOD



Drug and alcohol abuse is detrimental to your mental health. An article published in the journal *Science & Practice Perspectives* points out that around 67 percent of people in treatment for a substance use disorder have a lifetime history of depression, and anxiety and depression are potent risk factors for substance abuse and relapse.⁴

Although addressing these and other mood disorders through therapy during treatment is essential for long-term sobriety, a healthy diet in recovery can help stabilize your mood and help you maintain a better sense of wellness to get you through difficult patches.

The foods you eat and the nutrients they provide have an important impact on your mood and your mental health.

Complex Carbohydrates

Complex carbohydrates help promote the production of serotonin, a feel-good neurotransmitter that plays a key role in producing a stable mood. After eating complex carbohydrates, insulin is released to provide energy to the body's cells. This triggers a release of tryptophan in the brain, and this essential amino acid is synthesized into serotonin by folic acid and vitamins B6 and B12. Getting plenty of these nutrients can make a big difference in your mood during early recovery.

Good sources of complex carbohydrates include oat bran, oatmeal, long-grain brown rice and potatoes with the skin intact. Foods high in tryptophan include bananas, sweet potatoes and brown rice. Folic acid is packed into spinach, broccoli, lentils and Brussels sprouts. Good sources of vitamin B6 include pistachios, tuna, bananas and lean pork, and vitamin B12 can be found in clams, eggs, red meat and yogurt.

Tyrosine

Tyrosine is an amino acid that's essential for the production of dopamine, another feel-good neurotransmitter that produces a happy, stable mood. Foods high in tyrosine help boost dopamine levels and include lamb, salmon, pumpkin seeds and wild rice.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Unhealthy dietary fats found in fried foods, processed sweets and fatty meats promote inflammation and can lead to feelings of depression, according to a study published in the journal *Biological Psychiatry*.⁵ On the other hand, healthy fats like omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids fight inflammation and improve the function of serotonin and dopamine receptors for higher levels of these neurotransmitters in the brain. Walnuts, salmon, beef and Brussels sprouts are high in omega-3 fatty acids, while sunflower seeds, butter and chicken are good sources of omega-6 fatty acids.



RELIEVING STRESS

WITH GOOD NUTRITION



Another important relapse trigger is stress. Stress relief is a major focus in any high-quality treatment program, and in addition to proven stress relievers like meditation, deep breathing and regular exercise, a healthy diet can effectively reduce stress.

Vitamin C

Vitamin C is a potent stress reliever that lowers the body's levels of the stress hormone cortisol and reduces blood pressure associated with stress and anxiety. High levels of vitamin C are found in yellow peppers, kale, broccoli, oranges and tomatoes.

Dark Chocolate

According to UCLA's Center for East-West Medicine, a daily dose of dark chocolate with a cacao content of at least 70 percent helps to relieve stress at the molecular level, and it improves cognitive function.⁶

Green Tea

Tea is the only dietary source of L-Theanine, an amino acid that increases alpha brainwave activity to produce feelings of relaxation. Green tea has the highest levels of L-Theanine and provides other important nutrients as well, including polyphenols like catechins and flavonoids, which are powerful antioxidants that can help repair cell damage done by chronic drug abuse.



GOOD NUTRITION
HELPS KEEP CRAVINGS AT BAY



Cravings can be tough to weather, and coping with them is one of the most difficult aspects of recovery. Cravings may be triggered by low energy, dehydration, low blood sugar, anxiety and other mental health issues. A healthy diet can help keep cravings at bay by correcting nutritional deficiencies that may cause cravings as well as by promoting stable blood sugar throughout the day.

- ◆ **Whole grains** metabolize slowly and help reduce sugar cravings associated with quitting certain substances.
- ◆ **Raw spinach** contains L-glutamine, an amino acid that reduces anxiety and can help curb cravings.
- ◆ **Peanut butter** is a good source of protein, vitamin B and dietary fiber, which promote dopamine production and help stave off cravings.
- ◆ **Salmon** is packed with vitamin D, omega-3 fatty acids and protein, which improve cognitive function and reduce the intensity of cravings.



EATING RIGHT

FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP



Adequate sleep is crucial in early recovery. A lack of sleep increases stress, reduces feelings of well-being and causes irritability and anxiety, which can lead to relapse. A good night's sleep may be hard to come by, but the right foods can help. According to researchers at Pennsylvania University, a lack of nutrients like alpha carotene, potassium, lauric acid, calcium and selenium can cause insomnia and make it difficult to stay asleep through the night.⁷

- ◆ **Alpha carotene** is found in carrots, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and cabbage.
- ◆ **Selenium** is found in oysters, tuna, whole-wheat bread, beef and lamb.
- ◆ **Lauric acid** is found in coconut and palm oils and butter.
- ◆ **Potassium-rich foods** include dark leafy greens, dried apricots, low-fat yogurt and baked sweet potatoes.
- ◆ **Calcium** is found in dark leafy greens, broccoli and green beans.
- ◆ **Complex carbohydrates** with high levels of tryptophan can also promote sleep through improved serotonin function and by helping your body produce melatonin, the hormone that regulates sleep. A bowl of oatmeal, some brown rice or a banana before going to bed can help reduce the time it takes to fall asleep, as well as improve the quality of sleep.



HELP REPAIR
CELL DAMAGE WITH ANTIOXIDANTS



Substance abuse takes a toll on the cells in your body and promotes the generation of free radicals, which cause problems with cell function and can even kill healthy cells. Cell damage leads to a number of devastating illnesses like heart disease, Alzheimer's disease and cancer.

The best defense against free radicals are antioxidants, which help repair cell damage and promote healthy cell function. Foods with a potent antioxidant punch include purple grapes, blueberries, spinach, carrots, lentils and green tea.

A high-angle photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a grey hoodie, a grey beanie, and white earbuds. She is sitting on a metal staircase with perforated steps, looking down at a smartphone in her hands. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting sunlight. A dark teal semi-transparent banner is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT AND EATING DISORDERS IN RECOVERY



The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism points out that around half of those who abuse drugs also have a co-occurring eating disorder.⁸ The most common eating disorders that co-occur with addiction are anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder. It's not uncommon for people in recovery to turn to food to replace a substance of abuse, and weight gain may result from unhealthy eating habits. Others suffering from anorexia or bulimia may also be recovering from malnutrition, which can have a detrimental effect on recovery.

Addressing an eating disorder through therapy is critical for developing healthy eating habits and repairing the damage done by these complex disorders. Additionally, nutritional counseling during treatment can help you identify nutritional deficiencies that can throw a wrench in recovery, worsen physical and mental health problems and contribute to a relapse. Addressing nutritional deficiencies through an improved diet is the best way to regain good health during recovery from an eating disorder that co-occurs with a substance use disorder.

A photograph of three people in a kitchen. Two women in the foreground are wearing green aprons and smiling while preparing food on a wooden cutting board. One woman is holding a large knife. A man in a blue shirt and green apron is in the background, also smiling. The kitchen has a brick wall and various vegetables like tomatoes, cucumbers, and mushrooms are visible on the counter.

DIET TIPS FOR RECOVERY

It's not easy to change your eating habits, especially if bad habits have developed over years or you suffer from an eating disorder. Here are some tips to help you develop healthy eating habits.

- ◆ **Stay hydrated.** Dehydration can intensify cravings, cause irritability, reduce your quality of sleep and make it difficult to concentrate, all of which can reduce your sense of well-being and contribute to a relapse.
- ◆ **Learn how to cook.** Home-cooked meals are far healthier than eating out, and cooking meals from scratch with whole foods is far healthier than eating processed and prepared foods. Take a cooking class, read a book on cooking, or simply begin experimenting with recipes. Cooking can be a great way to relax, and it's a skill that will serve you well for a lifetime.
- ◆ **Eat meals on a regular schedule,** and don't skip meals. Skipping meals can lead to unhealthy snacking, weight gain and a reduced sense of well-being.
- ◆ **Choose healthy snacks** like fruits, vegetables and nuts. Fatty, sugary snacks and highly processed foods are generally unhealthy and can cause weight gain and a variety of health problems.
- ◆ **Learn as much as you can about good nutrition.** Understanding how nutrients fuel your body can enhance your motivation to eat a healthy diet.
- ◆ **Engage the services of a dietitian** to help you develop an eating plan that you'll enjoy. Enjoying your meals is an important factor in developing healthy eating habits.
- ◆ **Ask your dietitian or doctor about vitamin and mineral supplements** that can help you address nutritional deficiencies and promote better overall health and well-being. Keep in mind, though, that most of your nutrients should come from food rather than supplements.
- ◆ **Don't beat yourself up** when you eat the occasional unhealthy snack or meal. Enjoy fast food or a sweet snack every now and then, but try to make healthy choices most of the time.

Making other healthy lifestyle changes can help promote healthy eating by fostering an overall sense of good health and well-being. When you make healthy choices in one area of life, you're more likely to want to make healthy choices in other areas.

- ◆ **Reduce your overall stress by meditating** every day and performing deep breathing exercises to reduce stress levels on the spot. Meditation helps you become more self-aware, and it helps you stay mindful about small choices that can add up to big benefits.
- ◆ **Exercise for 30 minutes** most days of the week. Exercise has been shown to reduce cravings, ease stress and improve cognitive function, and it improves your general health.
- ◆ **Engage in activities you enjoy.** A sense of enjoyment in life is crucial for successful recovery, and it improves your outlook and promotes better self-care.

The power of healthy habits in recovery can't be overstated. Nutritious food choices and healthier eating habits improve your physical and mental health and help to repair the damage done by an addiction. Long-term recovery depends on long-term healthy habits, and developing those healthy habits early on will promote successful recovery for a happy, healthy future.



SOURCES

- 1 Substance Use Recovery and Diet. (2016, January 31). Retrieved from <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/002149.htm>
- 2 Reardon, B. (2016, October 28). Are There Foods That Will Help with Withdrawal Symptoms of an Opiate Addiction? Retrieved from <https://www.caring.com/questions/foods-that-help-with-opiate-withdrawl>
- 3 Tea and Cancer Prevention. (2010, November 17). Retrieved from <http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/diet/tea-fact-sheet>
- 4 Quello, S. B., Brady, K. T., & Sonne, S. C. (2005, December). Mood Disorders and Substance Use Disorder: A Complex Comorbidity. *Science and Practice Perspectives*, 3(1), 13–21. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2851027/>
- 5 Harrison, N. A., Brydon, L., Walker, C., Gray, M. A., Steptoe, A., & Critchley, H. D. (2009, September 1). Inflammation Causes Mood Changes Through Alterations in Subgenual Cingulate Activity and Mesolimbic Connectivity. *Biological Psychiatry*, 66(5), 407–414. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2885494/>

SOURCES

- 6 Wongvibulsin, S. (2014). Eat Right, Drink Well, Stress Less: Stress-Reducing Foods, Herbal Supplements, and Teas. Retrieved from <http://exploreim.ucla.edu/wellness/eat-right-drink-well-stress-less-stress-reducing-foods-herbal-supplements-and-teas/>
- 7 Grandner, M. A., Jackson, N., Gerstner, J. R., & Knutson, K. L. (2014). Sleep Symptoms Associated with Intake of Specific Dietary Nutrients. *Journal of Sleep Research*, 23, 22-34. Retrieved from <http://www.michaelgrandner.com/files/papers/grandnerjackson2013-dietsxs.pdf>
- 8 Grilo, C. M., Sinha, R., O'Malley, S. S. (2002, November). Eating Disorders and Alcohol Use Disorders. Retrieved from <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh26-2/151-160.htm>



Located in beautiful rural Pennsylvania, Silvermist offers individualized treatment for substance use and mental health disorders. Silvermist sets the standard for addiction treatment on the East Coast by providing men and women a beautiful and discreet environment filled with all the amenities that support early recovery. Silvermist is grounded in the highest clinical standards and is committed to clinical integrity, community and education.

(724) 481-1284

www.silvermistrecovery.com