Heart Health
Research confirms CV benefits of vitamin K2. Plus, fibre for functionality and consumer appeal

Cognitive Health
Micronutrients and palm tocotrienols for mental health and stroke prevention

MARINE INGREDIENTS
From algae to krill and beyond, marine-derived compounds offer an abundant source of nutritionally and pharmacologically bioactive substances and a wide range of health benefits
MICRONUTRIENTS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

The rising use of broad-spectrum micronutrients to support mental wellness and brain–gut health

Once limited to naturopaths and natural health practitioners, broad-spectrum micronutrient supplementation has matured from an alternative mental health solution to an empowered choice for doctors and consumers seeking to foster both brain and gut health. As a recent entrant into the micronutrients space, MicroNourish has embarked on a mission to catalyse this paradigm shift and support the wider education about the role that micronutrients can play in supporting mental wellness.

FROM CLINICAL PRACTICE TO EMPOWERED CONSUMERS

During the last 30 years, a quiet revolution has been taking place: an increasing number of health practitioners have experienced success by placing micronutrients at the heart of support programmes for patients facing mental health issues — from mood swings and lows (typically associated with bipolar and depression) to distractibility and anxiety (typically associated with ADHD and eating disorders). Practical results have been so promising that they have spurred numerous field studies, clinical trials and tracked case studies that point to a steady intake of a wide range of micronutrients as being key to a balanced mind, not only for those struggling with mental health issues, but also for those seeking everyday brain health and a positive outlook.

MICRONUTRIENTS: A LEGITIMATE KEY TO MENTAL WELLNESS

The study of micronutrients in mental health has ranged from scientists exploring the application of singular micronutrients, such as the link between zinc and vitamin D deficiencies and depression, to the study of complementary sets of nutrients, such as B complex vitamins for mood balance, and the use of broad-spectrum micronutrients in people with ADHD.1–4

Meanwhile, organic growth has continued through practitioner successes. In her book The Mood Cure, Dr. Julia Ross documents her experiences using micronutrients, including amino acids, at her holistic health clinic in San Francisco (California, USA) as part of biochemical rebalancing plans — or nutritherapy — for people struggling with mood problems and eating issues.5

The scientific team behind MicroNourish have seen similar results from open label trials and case studies: individuals and health practitioners have reported an increase in focus, better digestion, calmer stress responses and less mood swings when taking the broad-spectrum micronutrients found in the flagship micronutrient product, MicroNourish Core. The goal in launching MicroNourish Core was to combine the scientific studies, clinical experiences and latest research into nutrient ratios for bioavailability; the end result being a flagship formulation whose synergistic whole is more efficacious than the sum of its parts.

RISE OF THE superfood LIFESTYLE

Inquisitive consumers are making the connection: if micronutrients can improve symptoms in people struggling with mental health, could the decline of micronutrients in the daily diet be contributing to an increase in everyday stress, mood swings and difficulty focusing? Indeed, in a recent survey conducted by MicroNourish, 39% of respondents said they believed that a lack of nutrients contributed to their stress levels.6

These insights reflect a new wave of consumers who are empowered to take health decisions into their own hands by understanding what they are absorbing. You only have to look at the hottest lifestyle and dietary trends — from the rise of superfoods and nutrient-rich products to the increase in plant-based diets and veganism — to notice they are all styled around the promise that increasing micronutrient absorption is the key to achieving optimal physical and mental health.

An increasing number of health practitioners have experienced success by using micronutrients to treat patients facing mental health issues
Converging factors are, no doubt, contributing to the emergence of these investigative consumers. A host of books and documentaries, such as In Defense of Food and Food, Inc., have shone a spotlight on how challenging it can be to absorb a wide variety of nutrients from the Standard American Diet (SAD) because of modern lifestyles, an increasingly complex supply chain and the sharp decline of minerals in fruits and vegetables (as documented by the US Department of Agriculture). The coincident rise in the registration of Health Coaches at schools, such as the Institute of Integrative Nutrition, along with the growth of celebrity health blogs, are further bringing the benefits of live micronutrition to everyday conversations and consumers.

The most likely factor of all, though, is that people just want to feel better. In the MicroNourish stress study mentioned earlier, 69% of respondents said they experience stress levels above 60% on a daily basis, with 43% saying they eat more when stressed, and 50% saying their digestion is impacted by stress. It’s no wonder that ambitious individuals are seeking ways to take stress management and digestive health into their own hands.

As one MicroNourish customer, Christina Mendez, Harvard Business School Student and Hotel Developer put it: “When I first learned about micronutrients having the ability to meaningfully affect my mood and stress management, I was sceptical. When searching...
for a new career path, which should have been a very stressful time, I was not overcome with stress while taking the MicroNourish supplements. In fact, quite the opposite: I was cheerful, optimistic and resilient. Even though I had no idea what city I would be living in next week, I was in a happy, positive mood. I truly believe the MicroNourish supplements were behind my new response to stress. They helped me accept ambiguity and turn what could have been a period of anxiety into a period of hopefulness.”

YOU ARE WHAT YOU ABSORB
As more people derive benefits from taking high-quality micronutrients, it stands to reason that they will become more discerning about absorbing wisely in general. MicroNourish customers ask increasingly pertinent questions about the ingredients: examining the label before purchase, enquiring about whether there is gluten and lactose in the formulations and, most notably, increasingly asking about the form of the nutrients used.

These consumers are educating themselves about the benefits of choosing methylcobalamin, methylfolate (MTHF) and cholecalciferol — the active and more bioavailable forms of B12, folic acid and vitamin D — and are willing to pay for the upgrade. They are reading about the importance of minerals being chelated with (bound to) amino acids to optimize transportation through the digestive lining and are thus less willing to settle for low-grade minerals.

MicroNourish prioritizes bioavailability and gastrointestinal absorption as reflected aptly in its tagline, “You Are What You Absorb.” After all, micronutrients can only kick-start your brain and body if they make it to your cells. That’s why the MicroNourish flagship micronutrient formula is blended with high-performance chelated minerals and bioavailable vitamins, and enhanced with amino acids such as L-glutamine and herbal extracts — to help increase the synergistic benefits of the nutrients for brain health while simultaneously nourishing the gut for optimal absorption and gut-brain balance.

To further aid micronutrient absorption and a strong gut-brain connection, it is recommended that individuals take two digestive supplements alongside the flagship micronutrient formula — Active Plant Enzymes and Superfood Probiotics and Prebiotics — as part of the MicroNourish System. Together, the three products help to feed the brain and stabilize the gut for a balanced state of mind.

THE GUT–BRAIN CONNECTION
Indeed, with mounting evidence showing that the gut plays a key role in mental wellness, it would be amiss to tackle brain health without simultaneously addressing the gut. The scientific community has long referred to the gut as the “second brain,” acknowledging the impact that digestive health and the enteric nervous system (ENS) have on emotions.

However, recent breakthroughs strongly linking the health of the microbiome — which we already know helps to utilize micronutrients — to state of mind indicate that more tailored nutrition for the gut could further improve mental health outcomes. The Micronutrient Information Center at Linus Pauling Institute recently announced the results from its latest study, just one of many presently exploring the relationship between changes in diet to the gut microbiome and how that impacts cognitive flexibility.10 The results suggesting “changes in the microbiome may contribute to cognitive health” with mounting evidence showing that the gut plays a key role in mental wellness, it would be amiss to tackle brain health without simultaneously addressing the gut.

MAXIMIZING MICRONUTRIENT SYNERGIES
Dr Mark Pedersen, ND, Scientific Adviser to MicroNourish, comments: “Vitamins and minerals are not meant to be taken singly and solely. They are meant to be taken as a suite. It’s a kind of concert: one is a clarinet player; one is a trombone player; and when you put them all together, you get a beautiful symphony. Most of our metabolism (75%) occurs in the brain. We want to do it correctly and, as such, we want to balance those nutrients. There are about 25 nutrients that, if put in proper balance, convert energy most cleanly, and that’s what we’ve tried to do with MicroNourish Core.”
changes associated with eating a western diet,” indicate: this is just the beginning.

As MicroNourish Adviser, Ali Ardati, PhD, explains: “A large body of evidence exists in the literature linking the microbiota to wellness. Indeed humans receive their daily micronutrients through diet and the microbiota to maintain a balanced brain–gut axis. The new clinical trials under way will serve to educate us all on how we can further nourish the gut through targeted nutrition to advance cognitive function, focus and mood balance.”

While the science of the microbiome may be in its early stages, it is widely agreed that individuals seeking inner balance can benefit from starting with a nourished gut and a well-fed brain. As Dolores Baretta, an Acupuncturist and Digestive Health Specialist, told MicroNourish in a recent interview: “When patients talk about stress and difficulty focusing, they inevitably have bloating and digestive issues as well. It’s a cycle wherein each impacts the other: we have to tackle them together.”

That’s why MicroNourish invites customers to track and strengthen the four pillars that together support both brain and gut balance: state of mind, eating, digestion and energy (Figure 1). When one of the pillars is out of balance, the others tend to follow. For example, when someone is going through a stressful few days, they are more likely to eat erratically, have digestive issues and have poorer sleep. Likewise, most people will notice that if they eat too much sugar and caffeine, they will be distracted and have gut complaints and energy swings. That’s why the MicroNourish System targets brain and gut health with premium micronutrients, probiotics and enzymes simultaneously.

A CLEAR FUTURE
It is an exciting time to be in the world of micronutrients and brain–gut health. Scientists, doctors and consumers are paying attention. The mounting body of research connecting micronutrients and gut health to mental wellness will no doubt lead to a future when personalized micronutrient formulations will target the needs of the brain and the microbiota, and even be tailored to each person’s unique rate of nutrient absorption. This increasing emphasis on broad-spectrum micronutrient supplementation as a legitimate key to brain health will help to set a new standard for what it means to feel mentally well: where focus, mood balance and calm will become the norm, not the exception.

REFERENCES
2. D.C. Kerr, et al., “Associations Between Vitamin D levels and

While the science of the microbiome may be in its early stages, it is widely agreed that individuals seeking inner balance can benefit from starting with a nourished gut and a well-fed brain

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Nadia Tarazi, MBA, MA, CPCC, is the Founder of MicroNourish, an advanced nutrient system designed to target brain and gut balance for stable moods, better focus, mental clarity and a calmer relationship with food. Nadia curates the online MicroNourish Magazine, You Are What You Absorb, and created the coaching app, ThinkPal, which generates coaching questions to help people “get unstuck.” Nadia has an MBA from Columbia University and London Business School, an MA in Media and Communications from the University of London, and is a certified coach, trained by the Institute of Integrative Nutrition and the Coaches Training Institute.