

# Nurses' Influence on Nutrition Based Recovery in Substance Use Disorders



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## Purpose

- To identify the role(s) a nurse plays in potentiating nutritional changes during recovery and how this may impact the recovery process and sobriety.

## Methods

- Review of current literature including recently published and current journals, articles, and textbooks.

## Nutrition Guidelines in Recovery

- Increase the intake of complex carbs
- Increase physical activity
- Introduce vitamins and supplements
- Reduce caffeine consumption
- Increase fluid intake
- Avoid added sugar and processed foods
- Increase protein and fiber
- Eat small, more frequent meals throughout the day



## Findings

- The recovering addict's brain may take months to years to fully heal and return to normal functioning. Adding a nutritional component and early recognition of malnourishment and deficiencies can help restore function to an addict's brain.
- Nearly 4 million Americans over the age of 18 suffer from a serious mental health conditions that include comorbid drug or alcohol dependency.
- Nutrition is impacted in the disease state by a variety of factors such as failing to eat, eating poorly, malnourishment, overeating, organ damage, gastrointestinal disorders, and hypoglycemia.
- Some of the common nutritional deficiencies among alcohol and other substance users include folic acid, B-vitamins, electrolytes, amino acids, and minerals.
- The incorporation of nutritional recovery aids to promote the effectiveness of psychotherapy, group therapy, and medication-assisted treatment. Additionally, during detoxification, the use of nutritional supplements assists in relieving symptoms and prevents further deficiencies from occurring.
- Findings have shown that addicts have developed unhealthy eating behaviors due to the lack of knowledge, food preparation, and environments. This population is less likely to consume fruits and vegetables, and consume lower vitamin content foods. Education and health promotion have a profound impact.
- Effective and accurate nutritional interventions can decrease patient's nutritional deficiencies and boost mood, enhance motivation, repair the body, increase energy, reduce relapse, and restore immune function.

## Recommendations

- Recognition of malnutrition for individuals with a chemical dependency through the use of assessment and screening as a standard of practice.
- Treatment plans made in collaboration with the interdisciplinary team of a registered nurse, a certified advanced practice nurse/physician, and a registered dietitian.
- Patients to be screened routinely for any vitamin deficiency throughout treatment.
- Adding supplemental vitamins and encouraging nutrition.
- Dentation assessment to ensure it is adequate to consume a healthy diet.
- A detailed initial assessment and screening of recent diet history, height, weight, BMI and weight history to rule out eating disorder diagnosis.
- For patients with an eating disorder diagnosis, a higher frequency routine BMI comparison and weight history.
- During treatment, providing frequent health promotional activities are important in educating patients about any medication side effect, dietary changes, and physical activity. Emphasis on how changing diet can decrease symptoms and is an important component to their treatment and recovery.
- Encourage dietary guidelines and adherence to the dietary plan.

## References

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