

(Wellness Tips Ezine) The link between diet, alcoholism and anti-social behaviour



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The food choices we make may be one of the underlying determinants of whether we abuse alcohol, or get in trouble with the law.

The above statement may seem rather far fetched, but the research is slowly mounting that indicates **nutritional deficiencies play a role in how the brain works (or doesn't).**

Most of the industrialized world has an overabundance of food, but a huge percentage of people are undernourished despite often over-consuming calories. Why is that??

As I have discussed in several [previous posts](#), **our diet has radically changed in the last 100 years**, and even though we are eating lots of calories, the nutrient composition of our diet has been altered, resulting in a **dramatic INCREASE in consumption of sugar and flour, as well omega 6 fatty acids from vegetable oils and grain-fed animals, and a dramatic DECREASE in the consumption of omega 3 fatty acids from fish and grass-fed animals.**

We used to consume a ratio of 1 to 4 omega 3 to omega 6, and today the ratio is closer to 1 to 20. (Feeding grain to animals that are meant to eat grass alters the fatty acid composition of their meat, lowering its omega 3 content.) Most people now are very **deficient in omega 3 fatty acids**, and this is a problem with big consequences.

[Joseph Hibbeln](#), a researcher for the NIH, believes that due to **the industrial and fast-food diet** many of us are currently eating, we are suffering from diseases of deficiency, and that this diet **is actually restructuring the architecture of our brains**, leaving us with low serotonin and dopamine levels, **resulting in depression, anger, impulsive and violent behaviour.**

He goes as far as suggesting that perhaps many in our prisons are there because they are currently nutrient deficient, or were when they were very young while the vital structures of their brains were being formed.

If the cause of crime is at least partially due to nutritional deficiencies while in the womb or as a child, one can ask whether or not our whole system of justice is flawed. Can someone really be responsible for a crime if their brain is not working properly due to nutritional deficiencies, particularly the nutritional deficiencies of the criminal's parents??

It is also worth noting that many of those that populate our prisons grew up very poor, and simply may not have had access to good quality food.

Joseph Hibbeln backs up his views by looking at some studies, one done in Britain in at the Aylesbury jail, where they **gave one group of prisoners multivitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids, and another group a placebo, and noticed that violent aggression in the supplement group decreased by 37% and didn't in the placebo group**, and when the study ended and the supplements were stopped, aggression went back up again.

Another study was done by the NIH near Washington, where they studied the effects of omega 3 fatty acids on brain function, and noticed a 30% decrease in anger and hostility in those taking the supplements.

Hibbeln noted that year to year, there was a strong positive correlation between rise in omega 6 consumption levels and the rise in murder rates in the 38 countries he studied. Low omega 6 consumption, low murder rates and vice versa. It should be noted that this is only a correlation and does not indicate a cause.

If we were to slice open a brain, the first thing we would notice is that it is made of mostly fat. The fat we eat gets incorporated into the cells of our brain.

If the brain needs omega 3 fatty acids to function well, but too little is forthcoming in the diet, the brain makes do with what it is given, and usually substitutes omega 6 fatty acids, which are also long, fluid molecules. This is something like filling a vehicle with diesel when the pump runs out of gasoline. Both fuels are perfectly good for their own uses, but they can't do the job of the other very well.

When omega 3s are replaced with omega 6s in the brain, the neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin can't attach to the cell membranes properly, affectively stopping serotonin and dopamine from doing their job. **We know that low serotonin levels are linked to depression, impulsive and violent behaviour**

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"Why the Food Guides are Wrong: How to find health

linked to depression, impulsive and violent behaviour.

Because **the only source of omega 3 fatty acids available to the unborn and nursing baby is from the mother**, if she is not constantly replenishing her omega 3s through her diet or through supplementation, she can be drained of this vital nutrient, **leading to post-partum depression.**

If the mother is extremely **deficient in omega 3s during pregnancy** and breastfeeding, **eye sight and brain function in the baby may be affected permanently.** The other critical stage where omega 3s are vital to avoid permanent problems, is through puberty. Saturated fat is needed also to be able to absorb the omega 3 fatty acids.

Alcohol seems to deplete the brain of omega 3s very quickly. It seems to go the other way too - if one is low in omega 3 fatty acids, one tends to crave alcohol or sugar and flour products.

Interestingly enough, people from cultures that traditionally used to eat a high percentage of seafood and/or wild game all year round (colder climates usually) but no longer do, tend to be more prone to alcoholism.

So, **if alcoholism runs in your family**, try going back to the traditional diet of your culture, paying particular attention to the ratio of protein, fat and carbs that were eaten in the past. And be sure any meat consumed is grass-fed, and that the fish are wild.

One of the first strategies I would try in order **to reduce alcohol cravings would be to take at least 4000mg of a good quality fish oil per day.** (Speak to your doctor if you are on a blood thinner, as omega 3 fatty acids are excellent blood thinners too. Perhaps you can switch from the meds to the fish oils.) So if you are having a drink, up your omega 3 supplementation, or have a nice salmon or other fatty fish with your glass of chardonnay.

Food sources of omega 3 fatty acids include fatty fish like salmon, herring, anchovy, cod liver and their oils, flax seeds and its oil, walnuts, chia seeds, and grass-fed meats, free-range poultry and eggs. Fish or krill oil supplements can make it easy to get enough each day - I suggest cod-liver oil through a sunless winter, as it has the added benefit of containing vitamin D.

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