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# Role of diet in mental health

A diet low in fruit and veggies and high in junk food is linked with increased risk of mental illness

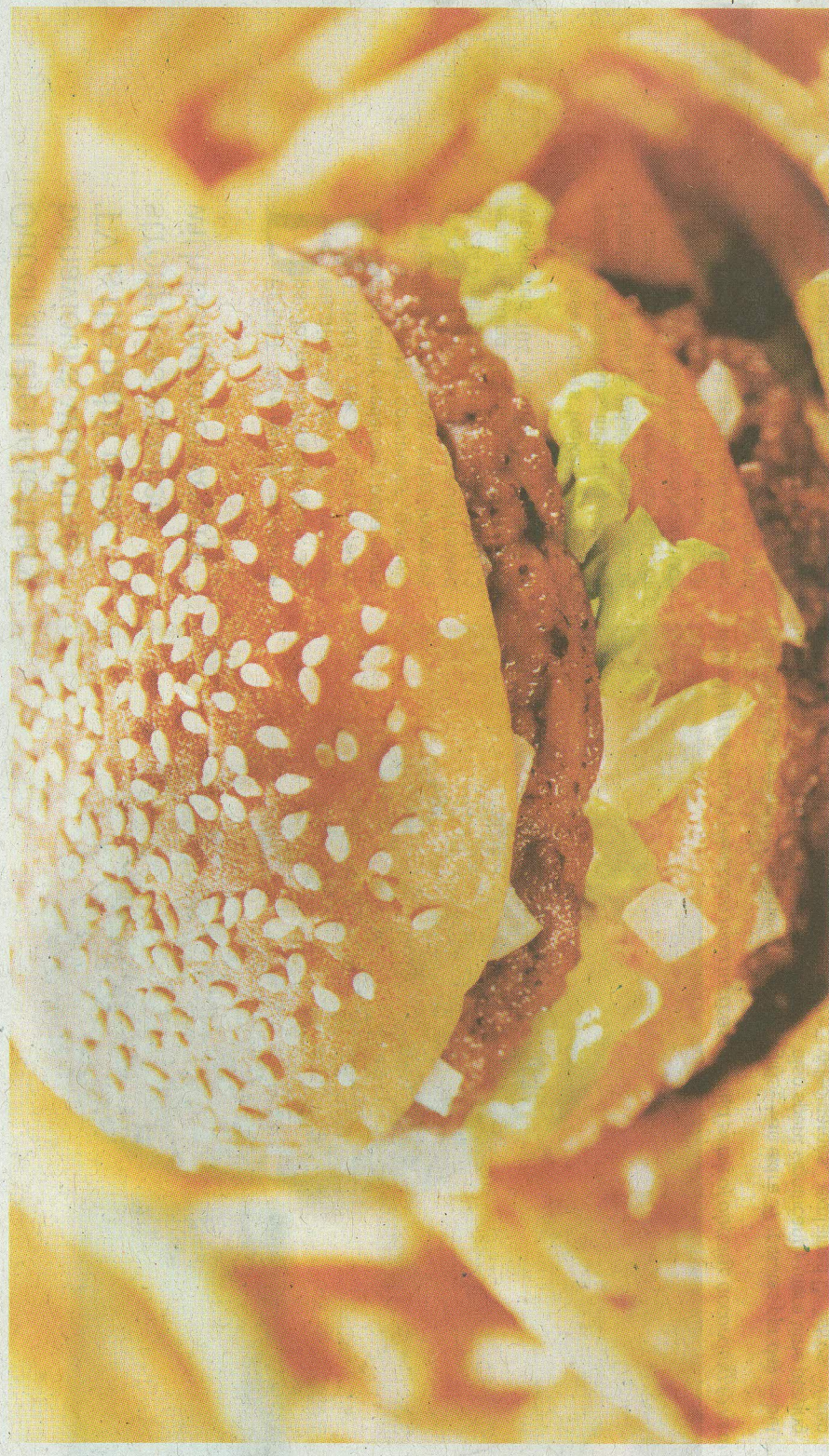
**N**EW US research has found that eating a diet low in nutrients may be associated with an increased risk of developing mental health problems.

Carried out by researchers at the Loma Linda University School of Public Health in California, the new looked at data gathered from 245,891 telephone surveys conducted between 2005 and 2015 which included in-depth information on participants' socio-demographics, health status and health behaviours.

The findings, published in the *International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition*, showed that adults who ate more unhealthy food, such as a lower consumption of fruits and vegetables and an increased consumption of French fries, fast food, and soda, were more likely to report symptoms of either moderate or severe psychological distress than those who ate a healthier diet.

The results also held true even after taking into account factors such as gender, age, education, age, marital status and income level.

Lead author Jim E. Banta commented on the findings saying that they are in line with those from other studies carried out in other countries, which have also found a link between a poor diet and mental illness. For example, a high sugar intake has been linked with bipolar disorder, and fried foods



An unhealthy diet increases the risk of mental illness.

linked with depression.

Banta added that the new findings cannot establish cause and effect between poor diet and mental illness and further research is still needed, although the team added that the findings provide additional evidence that public policy and clinical

practice should more explicitly aim to improve diet quality among those struggling with mental health.

"This and other studies like it could have big implications for treatments in behavioral medicine," said Banta. "Perhaps the time has come for us to take a closer look

at the role of diet in mental health, because it could be that healthy diet choices contribute to mental health. More research is needed before we can answer definitively, but the evidence seems to be pointing in that direction."

**AFP Relaxnews**