**NEWS ARTICLE**

The important role of zinc in mental health

**25 January 2024:** The [International Zinc Association (IZA) Africa](http://www.zinc.org) is highlighting the importance of zinc in mental health. “Zinc is an essential mineral that plays a role in many bodily functions, including mental health,” comments **Simon Norton**, Director: IZA Africa.

Zinc is crucial for brain growth and development and several other important bodily functions such as the immune system, protein and DNA synthesis, wound healing, and cellular health. Importantly, the body cannot produce or store zinc on its own, meaning it must be derived from your diet or supplements. Zinc is generally obtained through a variety of plant and animal foods.

Zinc also affects our neural or brain processes, according to a 2017 study. The study links zinc to specific neurotransmitters, namely ‘happiness’ hormones such as serotonin and dopamine. According to a 2021 study, zinc elevates levels of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) in the areas of our brain that control our emotions.

When zinc is in low supply, BDNF levels drop, and so does our mood. This has been supported by research linking zinc and anxiety across different groups of people. Zinc deficiency can result in depression, increased anxiety, irritability, emotional instability, and induced deficits in social behaviour.

Clinical studies have revealed that low levels of zinc intake contribute to the symptoms of depression, and that patients suffering from depression have a lower serum zinc level. Here are some specific examples of how zinc can support and improve mental health:

**Anxiety and depression**: Zinc supplementation has been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression in both adults and children.

**Schizophrenia**: Zinc supplementation has been shown to improve cognitive function and social skills in people with schizophrenia.

**ADHD**: Zinc supplementation may improve symptoms of ADHD in children and adolescents, reducing hyperactivity and impulsivity.

**Cognitive function**: Zinc is important for cognitive function, including memory, attention, and learning, especially in older adults.

The best form of zinc supplement to take is a matter of some debate, but some of the most well-absorbed forms include zinc picolinate, zinc citrate, zinc gluconate, zinc acetate, zinc glycerate, and zinc monomethionine. These forms of zinc are typically bound to organic molecules, making it easier for the body to absorb them.

“It is important to note that zinc supplements can interact with certain medications, so it is always best to talk to your doctor before taking them,” cautions Norton. When selecting a zinc supplement, opt for one made by a reputable company. Read the label carefully to make sure that you are getting the correct dosage. Start with a low dosage and increase it gradually to avoid side effects. Also, always take zinc supplementation with food to improve absorption.

***Ends***

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**Notes to the Editor**To download hi-res images for this news article, please visit [http://media.ngage.co.za](http://media.ngage.co.za/) and click the International Zinc Association link to view the company’s press office.

**About the International Zinc Association**

The IZA is the only global industry association dedicated exclusively to the interests of zinc and its users. Operating internationally and locally through its regional affiliates, the IZA helps sustain the long-term global demand for zinc and its markets by promoting such key end uses as corrosion protection for steel and zinc as being essential in human health and crop nutrition. IZA’s main programmes are Sustainability & Environment, Technology & Market Development and Communications.

In South Africa, the IZA plays a vital role in establishing the basis for the successful revitalisation of the zinc industry by increasing awareness of zinc and its applications and benefits in key sectors and markets, which will ultimately translate into the increased uptake of zinc.

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