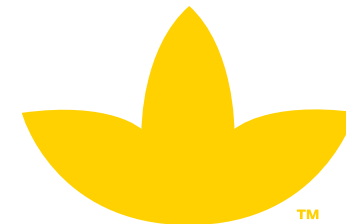




**From Trend to Trade:**

**Translating 2026 Trends into  
Healthcare Practice**



# Consumers want the food they eat in healthcare settings to both taste good and be good for them

Across facilities, consumers consistently want fresh, made-to-order, affordable meals. In senior living, expectations expand to include more variety and unique menu offerings

FOOD WANTS (top-2, 5 pt. scale)	HOSPITAL	LTC	SENIOR LIVING
Tasty/delicious options	75%	75%	77%
Work equally well for patients, staff, and visitors	72%	66%	69%
Low cost/inexpensive/affordable	68%	70%	69%
Cater to specific diets	68%	69%	68%
Fresh/made-to-order	66%	69%	74%
Convenient/available quickly	65%	62%	63%
Healthy/better-for-you foods	64%	65%	69%
Lots of variety each day	63%	71%	70%
Offerings that change and are updated frequently	58%	65%	70%
Interesting/unique menu items	56%	58%	61%

Source: Datassential Healthcare Segment Guide, Sept 2025

# The Protein Boom



\*Clinical Research.com: The protein Boom-a clear trend of 2026 emerges early

# Restaurants, snack brands, and health-minded consumers seem to be all doubling down on protein

Protein has become the breakout nutrition star of 2026.

It feels like all coffee shops, convenience and grocery stores, TV ads, and social media feeds have never had more focus on protein-packed snacks, high-protein breakfast items, protein-boosted beverages.

Even menus regularly share grams of protein per food item.

So, what was once an interest of athletes has transformed into a mainstream wellness market, both influencing what people eat and how brands innovate new offerings.

\*Clinical Research.com: The protein Boom-a clear trend of 2026 emerges early

# GLP-1 Medications Are Changing Restaurant Menus



1. GLP-1 users want smaller portions- but still crave quality and indulgent experiences
2. Protein and fiber matter balance is critical since protein alone can lead to nutrient deficiencies
3. Users crave fruits vegetables and whole foods while avoiding ultra processed, high fat sugary items
4. Flavor must deliver quickly and intensely because GLP-1 users get fuller faster every bite must count
5. Menu structure matter as GLP-1 dishes must :  
lead with protein,  
use tender, easy-to-digest textures  
Include healthy fats in moderation  
Avoid excessive richness or heaviness

\*Flavor & the menu How GLP-1 medications are changing Restaurant menus 2026

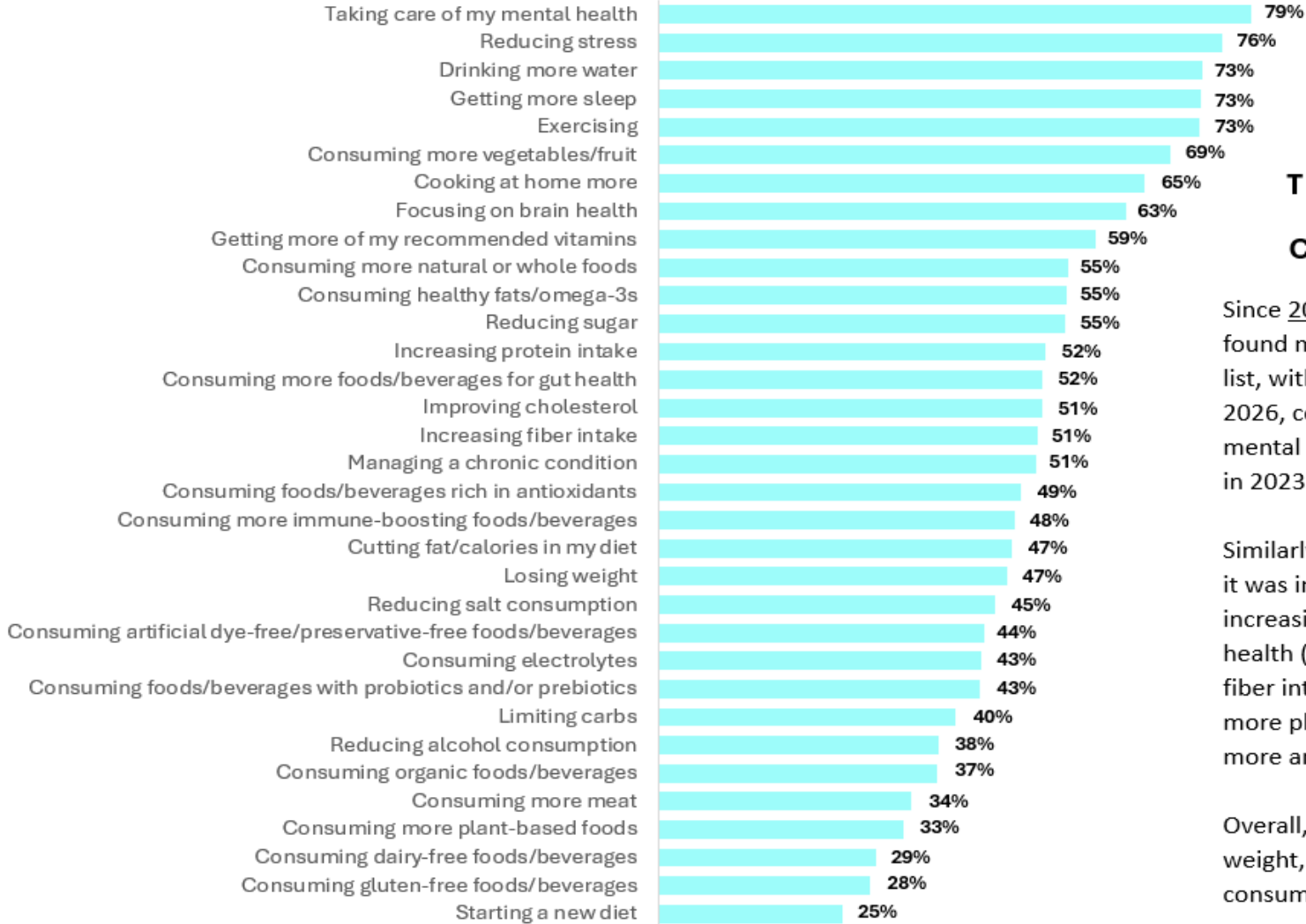
# FIBER TO THE MAX

## FIBER IS THE NEW PROTEIN

**What it is:** Gut health and GLP-1s are trending, and with that, manufacturers and retailers are focusing on fiber (which can naturally increase the GLP-1 hormone in the body) and calling it out on food/beverage packaging. Fibermaxxing, a TikTok trend where consumers try to fit as much fiber as possible into a recipe or dish, is further propelling the fiber trend.

**Why it matters:** Fiber is set to be the next big health trend following on the heels of protein, particularly at retail, where new products are popping up highlighting fiber in relation to gut health. Notably, over half of consumers say that when thinking about their health in 2026, consuming more foods/beverages for gut health will be important to them.

**Where to find it:** Retail



**TAKING CARE OF MENTAL HEALTH IS MOST IMPORTANT TO CONSUMERS HEADING INTO 2026**

Since 2023 when we last checked in on aspects of health consumers found most important to them, mental health has risen to the top of the list, with 79% of consumers saying it’s important to them heading into 2026, compared to 51% in 2023. Reducing stress, an aspect of improving mental health, also has risen from being important to 58% of consumers in 2023 to 76% in 2025.

Similarly, protein intake has skyrocketed from 38% of consumers saying it was important in 2023 to 52% saying it’s important in 2025. Tied with increasing protein intake is consuming more foods/beverages for gut health (52%), which connects to a rise in consumers saying increasing fiber intake is important (51%). In line with protein trending, consuming more plant-based foods now ranks lower in importance than consuming more animal meat.

Overall, diets and diet-related health attributes like limiting carbs, losing weight, or being dairy-free or gluten-free all rank lower among consumers’ health priorities in 2026.



When thinking about your health in 2026, how important are the following to you? (n=1005 | top-2, 5 pt. scale). Fielded September 2025.