



The Food Mood Connection: How Foods Affect Your Mood

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Learning Objectives

Review

Review what mental strength (resilience) is

Discuss

Discuss why mental health is important

Learn

Learn 7 strategies to help build mental strength

Identify

Identify what we will do to learn more effective strategies and improve our overall health



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Learning Objectives

1. Connect how the foods that you eat affect your emotions, mood, and energy levels
2. Choose foods that contain important nutrients that boost and improve your mood
3. Limit foods that negatively impact your mood



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SCIENCE BEHIND FOOD AND MOOD



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YOUR BRAIN



- Functions best with premium fuel that contains:
 - Vitamins
 - Minerals
 - Antioxidants
- Limit oxidative stress
 - Foods that are high in fat, sugar, and processed foods
- Brain can be damaged by refined and processed foods
 - Which promotes inflammation



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FOOD AND YOUR MOOD

- **Complex carbohydrates**

- Such as sweet potatoes, rolled oats, beans, brown rice, quinoa
- Increases availability of the feel-good chemical serotonin in your brain



- **Lean protein**

- Such as fish, lean beef, skin-less chicken, turkey, tofu, beans, eggs, and low-fat, low-sugar yogurt
- Linked to higher levels of dopamine and norepinephrine – brain chemicals that play a role in your mood, motivation, and concentration



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FOOD AND YOUR MOOD, CONT.

- **Fruits**

- Any fruit or 100% fruit juice
- Fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated, and may be whole, cut-up, pureed, or cooked
- At least half of the recommended amount of fruit should come from whole fruit, rather than 100% fruit juice
- High in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that nourish your body and have been shown to boost happiness

- **Vegetables**

- Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice
- Raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed.
- Based on their nutrient content, vegetables are organized into 5 subgroups: dark green; red and orange; beans, peas, and lentils; starchy; and other vegetables.
- High in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that nourish your body and have been shown to boost happiness



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IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS

- **Nutrients important to a healthy mood include:**
 - Folate.
 - Iron.
 - Long-chain omega-3 fatty acids (EPA and DHA).
 - Magnesium.
 - Potassium.
 - Selenium.
 - Thiamine.
 - Vitamin A.
 - Vitamin B6.
 - Vitamin B12.
 - Vitamin C.
 - Zinc.
- Over time, eating foods without a lot of nutrients can lead to nutritional deficiencies.



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SOME FOODS THAT HELP YOU BE HEALTHY

- **Whole Foods**
 - Preservatives, food colorings and other additives may cause or worsen hyperactivity and depression, so choose whole foods instead
- **Fiber**
 - Plant-based foods are full of fiber, which helps your body absorb glucose – or food sugars – more slowly and helps you avoid sugar rushes and crashes
 - Fiber-rich foods include fruits, vegetables, and nutrient-filled carbs like whole grains and beans



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SOME FOODS THAT HELP YOU BE HEALTHY, CONT.

● Antioxidants

- Inflammation fighters
- Plentiful in berries, leafy green vegetables, the spice turmeric
- Foods with Omega-3 fatty acids, including salmon and black chia seeds
- Dark chocolate also contains antioxidants (but indulge in moderation due to sugar content)



● Folate

- Type of B vitamin helps with dopamine production without forcing it to surge the way sugars do
- Found it in leafy greens, lentils and cantaloupes



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SOME FOODS THAT HELP YOU BE HEALTHY, CONT.

● Vitamin D

- Helps with the production of serotonin
- Usually get it from exposure to sunlight
- But mushrooms – especially reishi, cordycep and maitake - are another good source along with oily fishes, liver, and egg yolks
- Talk to your primary care provider to see if a Vitamin D supplement is needed



● Magnesium

- Essential mineral that helps with everything from nerve and muscle function to keeping a heartbeat steady
- Vital to the food-mood connection: a mineral deficiency can hurt the bacteria in your gut and cause depression and anxiety-like symptoms
- Load up with natural sources such as dark chocolate, cacao nibs, almonds and cashews, spinach and other dark leafy greens, bananas and beans



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SOME FOODS THAT HELP YOU BE HEALTHY, CONT.

● Fermented Foods

- Packed with probiotics, which are certain live bacteria that are good for your digestive tract
- Examples include sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, tempeh and the fermented drink kombucha.
 - These foods also tend to be high in sodium, so consume in moderation or skip altogether if you have high blood pressure



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FOODS TO LIMIT

- Meanwhile, avoid foods that could leave you feeling mentally drained
- Some foods with low nutritional value may give you a quick energy boost but could leave you with low energy and mood later on
- These foods include:
 - Flour-based foods such as breads, crackers and baked goods
 - Sugar-sweetened beverages and snacks, such as soda and cookies



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MEDITERRANEAN STYLE OF EATING

- **The Mediterranean style of eating typically includes:**
 - Plenty of fruits, vegetables, bread and other grains, potatoes, beans, nuts and seeds;
 - Olive oil as a primary fat source; and
 - Dairy products, eggs, fish and poultry in low to moderate amounts
 - Fish and poultry are more common than red meat
 - Centers on minimally processed, plant-based foods
 - Wine may be consumed in low to moderate amounts,
 - Fruit is a common dessert instead of sweets
- Shown to decrease symptoms of depression
- Helps to keep blood sugar stable after meals, which has been linked to improvements in mood and anxiety



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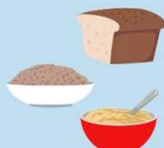
Plan Your Meals Around These Foods for a Mediterranean Diet



Vegetables.



Fruits.



Whole grains.



Extra virgin olive oil.



Beans and nuts.



Mediterranean Diet. Cleveland Clinic. (n.d.).
<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/16037-mediterranean-diet>

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GENERAL RULES STILL APPLY

- General rules still apply. This means:
 - Maintaining activity and movement
 - Managing stress
 - Staying hydrated
 - Not skipping meals
 - Being mindful of your caffeine and alcohol intake
 - Both can directly impact your mood or anxiety level
 - You may want to discuss with your doctor if you can drink caffeine or alcohol, and if so, how frequently and how much in order to stay healthy



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TAKE IT SLOW

- Try making small healthy food swaps, like trading white rice, pasta and bread for whole-grain versions
- This helps increase good fiber in your body, which aids in digestion
- Instead of a bag of chips, choose a side salad packed with nuts, seeds and colorful vegetables for extra flavor
- Take it week by week, changes do not have to be immediate
- You could start by adding more vegetables to your meals one week, cutting down on sweets the next, replacing some meats with beans in week 3, and so on.



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BE MINDFUL

- Being mindful of the healthy foods entering your body is also effective, especially when it comes to combating cravings
- Appreciate each smell, food texture and taste for each food
- Take note of how the nutritious snacks and meals make you feel afterward
- Some people who move to a mostly plant-based diet, for instance, often notice that their energy and focus are sustained throughout the day



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Questions or **Comments?**



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THANK YOU!

