

Food And Mood

Stay Energized and Be Happy!

Tips to Ward Off the Stress

Our overall dietary pattern is one big puzzle that interlocks with environmental and social factors such as stress. While more research is needed in this field, it is likely that the food we consume on a daily basis can affect how happy we feel.



Do as the Romans do...literally....follow the principles of a Mediterranean style diet

A Mediterranean diet relies on a range of good mood nutrients including Omega-3 fatty acids, and many vitamins and minerals found in whole grains, eggs, lean meats, and fruits and vegetables. A diet rich in nutrients is essential for good brain health. Most likely, one meal is not going to magically create good mood; however, a regular diet full of healthy nutrients in addition to moderate alcohol consumption, low amounts of saturated fats and zero amounts of trans fat can be beneficial in the long term.



Powerful protein

Protein may not only help increase alertness, but it also contains the amino acids, tryptophan and tyrosine which can ultimately end up as the feel good brain chemicals serotonin and dopamine. Choose lean meats, poultry and fish, in addition to vegetarian sources such as low fat dairy, beans, eggs and tofu. Sources originating from an animal, like meats or yogurt also contain vitamin B12.



Keep it complex

Complex carbohydrates like whole grains are rich in feel good nutrients like B vitamins, choline, magnesium, selenium, zinc and fiber to increase fullness. Carbohydrates may help to increase the availability of tryptophan, which can turn into serotonin. Keep things interesting by trying new grains like farro, quinoa, millet, or black rice.



Hydration

Drinking water may help make you more alert. Staying hydrated not only includes drinking fluids, but also eating foods that contain water such as fruits and vegetables and prepared foods like soups and smoothies. Drink mostly water and limit juices, sodas and caffeinated beverages. Try squeezing a wedge of citrus into your water for some added flavor.



Something's fishy. Fat is your friend.

Omega-3 fatty acids, specifically the components known as DHA and EPA may help to lower the incidence and severity of depression. While there are other types of Omega-3s, such as ALA, DHA and EPA are preferred for brain health. Our bodies cannot make these beneficial polyunsaturated fats (PUFAs) which means consuming them through diet is necessary. EPA and DHA are found in fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, sardines, herring, lake trout and mackerel. While there is no specific recommendation at this time put forth by the United States government for depression, the American Heart Association recommends at least two 3.5oz fish meals per week for general health.



YOU are a champion...so eat breakfast like one.

People who eat breakfast are more likely to experience positive mood than those who don't eat at all. You don't need to have a fancy sit-down breakfast to reap the happy benefits. Grab something to go like a smoothie, spinach and egg breakfast wrap, whole grain cereal bar, or yogurt and fruit. A fiber containing meal with whole grains can help to stave off hunger until lunchtime.



Ante-up on food sources of antioxidants, vitamins and minerals

Antioxidants are powerful free-radical fighting machines that may combat inflammation. Healthy nerve cells are vital for a positive mood. Just a few nutrients that act as antioxidants are vitamin C, vitamin E and selenium. B vitamins such as folate, B6 and B12 are crucial for maintaining good mood.



Snack between meals

Most of us know that grouchy feeling we get when we've waited too long to eat a meal. Not only do many of us then binge on unhealthy choices, but we may also feel guilty for having made the poor choice. By eating smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day, you may feel more energy and therefore feel happier. Choose healthy snacks like cut up vegetables and hummus, yogurt, or hard boiled eggs smashed with fresh dill & tahini (sesame paste).



Respect food. Taste it. Indulge.

It's ok to indulge yourself. Studies show that those who aren't constantly restricting "forbidden" foods, are less likely to binge eat. Binge eating can then lead to feelings of shame and guilt. If you really want a piece of dark chocolate, eat it. Don't inhale it. Enjoy every satisfying bite rather than eating mindlessly.



Keep on buzzin'

Chock full of antioxidants in addition to a little folate, coffee can actually be good for you. Consumed in MODERATION it can increase alertness and mood. However, some people can feel jittery after a cup o' joe. Every person must determine his/her optimal dose.