

Foods for boosting mood

The link between food and mood simply lies in getting enough of the 'good stuff' found in the right foods. The human diet nowadays consists of a lot of 'junk' food with very little nutritional value which makes people more tired and lethargic, and often leads to weight gain which has further negative effects on mood and self esteem.

What in my food affects my mood?

- **TRYPTOPHAN:** an amino-acid that the body uses to help make serotonin, which is known to modulate mood, emotion, sleep and appetite. Tryptophan is found in bananas, walnuts, turkey, sunflower seeds, milk, eggs, cheese, brown rice, chicken and fish.
- **B-VITAMINS:** these vitamins help the process your body uses to get or make energy from food, so not getting enough B-vitamins in your diet can make you lethargic and even depressed. A lack of B6 or B12 can also cause anaemia. Foods that are rich in B-vitamins include whole grains (such as wheat and oats), fish and seafood, poultry and meats, eggs, milk, leafy green vegetables, beans and peas.
- **OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS:** essential fatty acids which are important to your overall health and wellbeing, and notably for nerve and brain function. Good sources of omega-3 are oily fish (such as salmon, mackerel and sardines), omega-3 eggs (check the box), walnuts, flaxseeds and sunflower seeds.

TIPS OF THE WEEK

- **EAT REGULARLY TO PREVENT BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS DROPPING**
- **MAKE SURE YOU GET ENOUGH ESSENTIAL VITAMINS AND MINERALS IN YOUR FOOD**
- **TRY TO EAT FOODS THAT RELEASE ENERGY SLOWLY TO KEEP YOUR BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS STEADY FOR LONGER**
- **DRINK PLENTY KEEP HYDRATED DRINK ABOUT 1.2 LITRES/DAY**
- **HOW YOU FEEL PHYSICALLY AFFECTS YOUR MOOD – LOOK AFTER YOUR BODY**

Did you know!

- **Sweet Potatoes** are full of B vitamins folate and B6 which can help to alleviate premenstrual symptoms and depression. They also help to keep blood sugar levels steady and therefore help to prevent mood swings and sugar cravings.
- **Avocados** contain tryptophan, vitamin B6 and folic acid.
- **Bananas** give a sustained energy boost and are packed with vitamins and tryptophan. They are also packed with potassium, levels of which can be depleted by stress.
- **Leafy greens** such as broccoli are an excellent source of folic acid, a lack of which has been linked to a depressed mood.
- **Oatmeal** is rich in soluble fibre which helps to smooth out blood sugar levels by slowing the absorption of sugar into the blood.
- **Lentils** are an excellent source of B vitamin folate, low levels of which have been linked to depression. Lentils are a great food for vegetarians as they also contain protein.

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THE MIND MEAL: This recipe is an example of how you could combine a range of proteins, omega-3 fats, vitamins, wholegrains and healthy gut foods in a single meal. It's also low in sugar, caffeine and additives.

Serves: 2–4 people
Time: 20 minutes
Cost: under £10
Skill level: easy

Calories calculated on each meal serving 4.

- **MAIN COURSE**
PASTA WITH PESTO & OIL-RICH FISH (289KCAL)



You Will Need

- 250g packet of wholemeal pasta
- 45g of pesto
- 200g tuna steak

How to make it

1. Cook the pasta in boiling water following packet instructions, then drain.
2. Add 3 tablespoons of pesto to drained pasta and mix together.
3. Oven bake tuna in oil sprayed tin foil around 200C/220C. Cooking time is dependent on size, thickness tuna.

SWAP IN: gluten-free pasta; nut and dairy-free pesto; any oil-rich fish, such as salmon, sardines or mackerel; soybeans; roasted butternut squash.

- **SIDE DISH**
AVOCADO SALAD & SEEDS (150KCAL)



- 250g mixed lettuce leaves
- 1 ripe avocado
- 50g of seeds (sunflower and pumpkin)

1. Wash the salad leaves, and place on a dish.
2. Remove skin and stone from avocado, slice, and add to salad.
3. Sprinkle seeds over salad and serve.

SWAP IN: spinach or watercress leaves; other seeds, such as flaxseed, linseed or a mixture; a light drizzle of olive oil.

- **DESSERT**
FRUIT & YOGHURT (172KCAL)



- fresh fruit (such as 1 apple and 1 banana)
- 8 dried apricots
- 40g broken walnuts
- 4 spoonfuls of plain probiotic yoghurt

1. Wash fresh fruit and cut into small pieces (removing core if you want).
2. Rinse dried apricots, cut into quarters, then put in a bowl with the yoghurt and fruit.
3. Serve with walnuts sprinkled over the top.

SWAP IN: any fresh fruit, such as strawberries or pears; any dried fruit, such as cranberries; any nuts, such as almonds or pecans; dairy-free yoghurt.

The Mind Meal is based on a recipe created by Amanda Geary, nutritionist and founder of The Food & Mood Project.