

Supporting Mood through Food

Spinach

Rich in iron and folate, Popeye's favourite vegetable will give your mood a boost by increasing your serotonin levels. Other dark green leafy vegetables and asparagus also contain folate to help support brain health.

SERVE IT Replace lettuce with spinach in any salad, sandwich or wrap or blend it in a smoothie. Try it in an omelet for an extra brain boosting nutrient kick. Frozen blocks of spinach store easily in the freezer and can be added to soups, pasta sauce, rice, or casseroles.



Eat your Colors! Aim to eat a variety of colors in the fruits and vegetable group over the course of the week to make sure you're getting the variety of nutrients that your body needs to function. For mood enhancing effects, and as recommended by Canada's Food Guide, choose 1 orange and 1 green fruit and vegetable daily.

SERVE IT **Green colored** fruits and vegetables include avocados, green apples, green grapes, kiwis, pears, limes, artichokes, arugula (a type of lettuce), asparagus, broccoli, broccoli rabe, green cabbage, brussel sprouts, napa cabbage, green peppers, green beans, kale, celery, endive, and cucumber. **Orange colored** fruits and vegetables include apricots, cantaloupe, mango, nectarines, oranges, papaya, peaches, tangerine, butternut squash, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, orange peppers, orange tomatoes.

Eggs

Eggs are a rich source of choline, which helps to make the neurotransmitter acetylcholine (it helps with signaling between memory supporting brain cells, among many other things), as well as zinc, which helps us to feel awake and energetic by regulating our metabolism.

SERVE IT Eggs are a great breakfast food and can be made scrambled in the microwave. Serve with a slice of whole grain toast, tomato, and avocado slices for a mood-regulating satisfying breakfast. A boiled egg plus a piece of fruit also makes a great mid-day snack. If you have diabetes or heart disease, limit consumption to 2 eggs per week (egg whites are unlimited); otherwise 1 egg per day is fine.



Walnuts

A rich source serotonin boosting omega-3's, calming magnesium, and good source of fibre and protein. Hazelnuts and almonds have similar mood-boosting effects, and you don't need a lot of them to make a difference.



SERVE IT Add 2 tbsp to ¼ cup of walnuts, hazelnuts or almonds to a spinach salad or over oatmeal or make your own trail mix by mixing ½ cup high fibre cereal with 2tbsp each nuts and dried fruit. Limit nuts to 2-4 TBSP daily due to their high kcal content, or 1 small handful worth.

Yogurt and Low-fat Dairy



Look for 'active bacterial cultures' on the ingredient list to get the most benefits from the gut friendly live probiotics, which function to keep our intestinal tract healthy and us feeling good. The whey protein found in milk and greek yogurt helps to soothes stress and anxiety levels.

SERVE IT Add antioxidant rich fresh or frozen fruit, a few nuts, and some ground flaxseed on top of plain Greek or regular yogurt, or use it instead of sour cream on baked potatoes or to make a vegetable dip. Consume 250-500ml of skim, 1%, or 2% white milk daily – try making oatmeal with milk instead of water, add some milk to soups, or have a glass as an afternoon snack.

Whole Grains and Complex Carbs

Whole grain complex carbohydrates regulate our blood sugars to keep our moods stable, provide energy boosting B-vitamins, and are a major source of dietary fibre, which keeps us feeling full and regulates our appetite. Try to avoid 'white' refined grains and carbohydrates (bread, pasta, pretzels, cakes, etc) as contain low levels of fibre, increase insulin levels and may contribute to anxiety in some individuals.

SERVE IT Quick or Old-fashioned oats (instead of instant) make an easy, inexpensive breakfast – top with some nuts and cut up fruit to keep cravings at bay. Three cups of popcorn (air-popped or ½ bag low-fat) makes a great fibre-filled afternoon snack. Instead of brown rice, try using pearl barley, you cook it the same way (1 cup pearl barley to 2 cups of water). Look for bread with 2g of fibre or more per slice.



Salmon

One of the richest sources of omega-3 in our diet, salmon can help fight off depression and mood swings.

SERVE IT Baked, broiled, or grilled, salmon fits with almost any vegetable. Try it with asparagus or broccoli to add some additional folate to your diet or add it to a spinach salad. Use leftovers on some whole grain crackers with low-fat herb and garlic cream cheese. Canned salmon can be used for a quick salmon salad sandwich on whole grain bread with spinach or to make salmon cakes.



Dark Chocolate



One of the highest sources of polyphenols in our diet, as well as other potent antioxidants and calming magnesium. The key is choosing chocolate with a minimum 72% cocoa or more, the higher the number the more nutrients and antioxidants (your taste buds will adapt with time) and the less sugar it will contain.

SERVE IT 1oz of dark chocolate (about 1/3 of a 100g chocolate bar) around 3pm can be a great pick-me-up, or, try adding 1 -2 TBSP of cocoa powder (i.e. Fry's) to oatmeal or a smoothie.

Lentils & Legumes

One of the highest sources of magnesium for our body, magnesium has been shown to reduce anxiety levels. The fibre in lentils and legumes help to keep us full and regulate our blood sugar levels, which helps to regulate our moods.

SERVE IT Add canned black beans to a 'southwest' type salad or mix a can of lentils in with ground beef or chicken to make homemade burgers. Lentils and legumes can be added to any soup, spaghetti sauce, or cooked rice to boost the fibre and nutrients. To avoid gassy side effects, eat a small portion on a regular basis and your bowels will adapt! *Note: Rinse the canned beans under running water prior to using.*



Bananas



Power up with potassium, mood elevating magnesium, and energy producing Vitamin B6 (which also plays a role in our mood), all found in the tropical fruit. Look for small bananas or limit your serving to ½ of a large to keep sugar content down.

SERVE IT Mash 1 banana really well in a bowl, add some cinnamon and then add 2 eggs. Mix together well and add to a lightly greased frying pan. Cook like an omelette over medium heat, flip and serve with nuts and greek yogurt. ½ a banana makes a great addition to oatmeal, topped with 2 TBSP of sunflower seeds. Or, for a mid-day snack, try ½ -1 banana with 1 TBSP of peanut butter or almond butter.

Lean protein

Mood boosting Vitamin B6, B12, iron, zinc and blood sugar regulating chromium are just some of the nutrients found in meats and alternatives. Protein also contains tyrosine, an amino acid that boosts our alertness and energy levels. Protein helps to regulate our blood sugars, keep us full, and boost energy levels.

SERVE IT Aim to have a serving of protein with each meal to keep your energy levels up and your mood in check. Chicken on whole grain bread for a sandwich, a boiled egg with a piece of fruit for a snack, and some fish with sweet potatoes and snap peas for dinner. One serving is about the *size of the palm of your hand, or a deck of cards*, which is often smaller than what we buy in the grocery store. Many of us get too much at the end of the day and not enough at the beginning of the day!

