

## Link Between Food and Depression

Food is fuel for the body. Filling up with healthy, nutrient-dense food will make a difference in a person's overall daily mood and functioning.

While there is no specific diet to treat depression, eating more of some foods and less or none of others can help relieve symptoms and positively impact the brain.

In this article, we look at some foods and nutrients that may be beneficial and some that people should avoid.

### Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Not only are omega-3s good for the heart, but they may also benefit your mood. Recent research reveals a decreased risk in symptoms of depression with a diet that includes omega-3 fatty acids.

There is no definitive evidence that omega-3s can prevent depression, but the health benefits of including them in a balanced diet can do more good than harm. There is the option of omega-3 or fish oil supplements, but be sure to talk with your physician before taking any.

Sources include:

- Fatty fish (salmon, tuna, herring, sardines, anchovies, mackerel and rainbow trout)
- Flaxseed and flaxseed oil
- Walnuts
- Avocado
- Canola and soybean oils
- Dark leafy greens
- Tofu

### Antioxidants

Fruits and vegetables are packed with vitamins and minerals that provide us with a natural energy boost and fight off damaging molecules called free radicals that can damage body cells and may be linked to causing cancers. Make sure that you eat food rich in beta-carotene, vitamin C and vitamin E.

Sources include:

- Cranberries
- Blueberries
- Blackberries
- Beans

- Artichokes
- Russet potatoes
- Pumpkins
- Tomatoes
- Peaches
- Wheat germ
- Broccoli

## Vitamin B12 and Folate

These B complex vitamins are very important in red blood cell formation and DNA synthesis. Anemia, which is caused by a decrease of red blood cells has been associated with higher rates of depression, while DNA methylations has potential links as well.

Sources include:

- Meat
- Eggs
- Leafy greens
- Asparagus
- Some fortified grains
- Strawberries
- Cantaloupes

## Vitamin D

Absorbed from sunlight or found in some fortified products (dairy, orange juice), vitamin D plays a key role in affecting the neurotransmitters in the human brain that are linked to depression.

Sources include:

- Vitamin D-fortified milk or juice
- Eggs
- Liver
- Swiss cheese
- Sockeye salmon
- Shrimp
- Cod

## Whole Grains, Fruits, Vegetables and Legumes

Consuming complex carbohydrates, such as whole grains, fruits, veggies and legumes, can boost mood and promote healthy digestion and body function. Research has shown that when carbohydrates are eaten, serotonin is released, producing an overall calming effect.

## Foods to Limit

While it may not be possible to avoid certain foods altogether, limiting them can help enhance your mood. These include:

- Foods that are high in saturated fat, trans fats and added sugar
- Alcohol, a depressant that affects chemicals in the brain and all nerve cells
- Foods with caffeine that increase feelings of anxiety and jitteriness and impact the quality of sleep

## Resources

- Nutrition.gov: [www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov)
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration: [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)
- U.S. National Library of Medicine: [www.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov)
- National Institute of Mental Health: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

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