



**We all know that diet is good for our physical health; however, it can also play a part in our Mental Health too. The area of Nutritional Psychiatry is relatively new but research is starting to show that not only can what we eat affect us physically, but it can play a part in how we feel mentally too. To start with a fact; people who eat a traditional diet, for example, Japanese or Mediterranean are 25 – 35% less likely to suffer from Depression.**

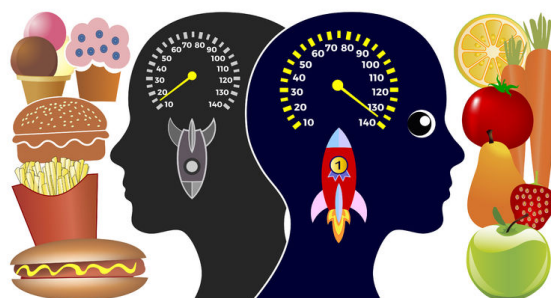
Your brain needs the right food to function properly. All the time links between diet and physical and mental illnesses are being better understood. What foods / nutrients should you eat that will help your mood? Here is a list:

- **Probiotics:** Never neglect your gut. 95% of your serotonin is produced in your gut so low levels of serotonin can influence poor moods. So think Kimchi, Kombucha, yogurt, cottage cheese, Miso and other fermented foods. By keeping your friendly gut bacteria at healthy levels it will help your overall physical and mental health.
- **Selenium:** Low levels of Selenium have been linked to poor moods. As well as supplements, it can be found in whole grains, Brazil nuts, some seafood and organ meats, such as liver.
- **Zinc:** helps the body perceive taste, boosts the immune system, and may also influence depression. Zinc levels may be lower in people with clinical depression, and zinc supplementation may also improve the effectiveness of antidepressants. As well as supplements, Zinc is in whole grains, oysters, beans, and nuts.
- **Omega 3:** May increase the level of healthful fats available to the brain, preserve the myelin sheath that protects nerve cells, and keep the brain working at the highest level. In turn, this can reduce the risk of mood disorders and brain diseases occurring. Sources include Mackerel, Salmon, tuna nuts (almonds and walnuts) and seeds such as flaxseed,
- **B Vitamins:** Vitamin B12 and folate, or vitamin B9, have both been linked to a reduced risk of mood disorders. Sources of B vitamins include eggs, meat, poultry, fish, oysters, milk, whole grains
- **Protein:** Getting adequate protein is essential for everyone, but some forms of protein, in particular, is important for mental health. Foods such as tuna, turkey, and chickpeas have good levels of tryptophan, which is needed to form serotonin.
- **Vitamin D:** Get outside and get some sun. Vitamin D has been shown to help in mood disorders. So if it is damp and grey, get fortified breakfast cereals and milk (plant based alternatives will have vitamin D added) and oily fish such as mackerel and salmon.
- **Antioxidants:** Vitamins A, C, E are all required by the body to help repair cells damaged by free radicals such as premature cell death, aging and cell mutations. It has also been shown that having your antioxidants helps reduce inflammation and stress related disorders.



Likewise with what foods you should eat, here is a list of some of the foods you should avoid

- **Processed food** – sorry, that includes food such as sausages and bacon. But more importantly those quick ready meals. These contain refined carbs and are not nutrient dense, thus, can cause mood and emotion swings once energy from the food has been used by the body.
- **Alcohol** – not only is it full of empty calories, but it acts as a depressant
- **Caffeine** – can cause anxiety, so it is best avoided after midday.
- **Foods high in Sugar** – these foods are not full of nutrients and can cause a crash once the energy is gone and this can influence mood and emotions.
- **Processed oils** – think Safflower and corn oil as these are high in Omega 6. Whilst some Omega 6 is necessary, it can also promote inflammation in the brain and bring on depression symptoms.





Quick Anti Oxidant check for you. Score 1 point for each answer you say Yes to.

- Do you eat fried food most days?
- Do you eat less than a serving of raw or fresh vegetables each day?
- Do you eat fewer than two pieces of fresh fruit a day?
- Do you rarely eat beans, lentils, quinoa, nuts, seeds, or whole-grains?
- Do you eat smoked or barbecued food or grill cheese on your food?
- Do you rarely eat foods rich in vitamin C, such as bell peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, watercress, lemons, oranges, kiwi, strawberries?
- Do you rarely eat foods rich in vitamin E, such as tuna, sardines, salmon, beans, peas, sesame seeds, wheat germ, sunflower seeds, vegetable oils?
- Do you rarely eat foods rich in vitamin A or beta-carotene, such as carrots, squash, pumpkin, cabbage, watercress, sweet potatoes, melon, mangoes, tomatoes, broccoli, beef liver, veal liver?

Now count up. If you scored zero then you are doing well, your diet is full of Anti Oxidants and you are minimising your intake of unhealthy foods. If you scored between 1 and 4 then it is a low score, but not ideal and you should look at boosting your intake of Anti Oxidant rich foods. If you scored 4 or more then unfortunately, this puts you at risk of premature aging and at an increased risk of mental health issues and other diseases such as type 2 diabetes and heart diseases. Look at how you could adjust your diet and also speak to a Nutritional Advisor to see if they can help.

The British Dietetic Association advises the following:

- Get the right balance of fats in your diet
- Eat wholegrains, fruit and vegetables
- Include Oily fish in your diet.



So, here are a few ideas on how you can incorporate some food and snacks into your daily routine that will help your mood!

- Falafel - full of chickpeas, garlic and spices. Good for you, full of healthy fats and wholegrain Also full of Protein too especially Tryptophan which is needed by the body to help form Serotonin.
- Dips - Guacamole and Hummus with veg sticks. Fresh Veg which is good you full of vitamins and minerals. Dips, again chickpeas which are good for you, see above! Guacamole is avocado, coriander and chillies. Healthy fats, Vitamin B6, Magnesium
- Fruit Kebabs - Fruit, full of Antioxidants and vitamins and minerals for healthy you and healthy mind. Also a fun way to have fruit! You could also do a dark chocolate dip for them as a bit of indulgence.
- On the kebab front, a mixture of skewers with fish and/or veg marinated in Indian spices. Use salmon, tuna, mackerel. All good sources of Vitamin D and Omega 3. Serve with a yogurt dip. Get B vitamins and healthy gut bacteria too.
- Staying with Fish, possibly Mackerel with Salsa Verde - make up a Salsa Verde and smear onto Mackerel fillets before wrapping up and securing with a cocktail stick and cooking. Mackerel is a sustainable fish, good source of Vitamin D and Omega 3. Also with a Salsa Verde you are getting healthy fats from the oil and herbs. Never underestimate the power of herbs!!
- Lastly, what about a healthy flapjack full of fruit, nuts and seeds (assuming no one has a nut allergy). Make up the bar with almond or peanut butter instead of melted butter and then use fruit, nuts and seeds instead of golden syrup. Again, wholegrains, selenium, zinc, b vitamins, omega 3. All healthy and good for the mind too!

For more information on how I can help you from Nutritional Assessments to Health Reboots and other services please get in contact.