



Food & Mood

There are many ways your nutrition can affect your mood. On a basic level, keep your blood sugar steady throughout the day with regular healthy meals and snacks. Eating a combination of foods that include nutritious carbohydrates, proteins and fats helps you do this. Drinking enough fluids also helps keep mood steady. Some people need more carbohydrate-rich foods in the winter to increase their levels of the brain chemical serotonin levels while others feel better with protein-rich meals (especially during the day) perhaps due to low levels of dopamine. It's a good idea to get a mix of both, as well as healthy fats like fish and olive oil.

There are also many vitamins and minerals that are needed to make and use various brain chemicals and hormones that influence mood, appetite and sleep. Below is a list of some of the major nutrients and where to find them in food. Also remember that eating too much of anything at one time can affect your mood.

What About Chocolate?

- Effects of chocolate on moods may depend upon amount & type consumed
- Difficult to know how much of the love affair with chocolate is cultural (used so often for gifts, rewards, etc.) and how much is physiological.
- Chocolate stimulates release of serotonin (calming effect)
- Cocoa butter - component of real chocolate, solid at room temperature and melts at body temperature resulting in a pleasurable texture ("mouthfeel")
- Theobromine and caffeine in chocolate give a mental lift
- The combination of sugar, fat, and PEA (phenylethylamine) in chocolate stimulates an endorphin release in brain (pleasure)
- PEA also stimulates nervous system, blood pressure and heart rate - simulates feelings experienced "in love" (Note: PEA is also in cheese & salami - foods not known for this effect!)
- My advice: if you indulge in chocolate make it good chocolate (preferably dark) in moderation!

Nutrients That Affect Mood	Foods Where You'll Find Them
<i>B vitamins & vitamins C & E: needed to make neurotransmitters (brain chemicals) such as serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine.</i>	
Vitamin B ₁ (thiamin)	Whole grain bread, wheat germ, greens, oranges, legumes, brewer's yeast (nutritional yeast flakes), sunflower seeds
Vitamin B ₂ (riboflavin)	Milk, yogurt, avocado, spinach, broccoli, whole grain bread, cheese, mushrooms
Vitamin B ₃ (niacin)	Meat/chicken/fish, peanut butter, potatoes, brewer's yeast, wheat germ, yogurt, mushrooms
Vitamin B ₆ (pyridoxine)	Bananas, avocados, meat/chicken/fish, brewer's yeast, wheat germ, sunflower seeds, potatoes, collard greens, black beans, peanut butter, almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts
Vitamin B ₁₂ (cobalamin)	Tuna, oysters, yogurt, milk, fish, chicken, cheese, fortified foods
Pantothenic Acid	Oranges, collard greens, potatoes, broccoli, brown rice, cantaloupe, wheat germ, salmon, chicken, yogurt, sweet potato, eggs
Biotin	Oatmeal, soybeans, peanut butter, salmon, milk, brown rice, chicken, eggs, wheat germ
Folic Acid	Brewer's yeast, spinach (& other leafy greens), oranges, avocados, broccoli, wheat germ, legumes, bananas, whole wheat bread
Vitamin C	Papaya, bell & chili peppers, citrus fruit, broccoli, strawberries, collards, kale, peas, potato, yam, squash, tomato, melon
Vitamin E	Vegetable & nut oils, whole grains, wheat germ, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, almonds, soybeans
<i>Minerals: help convert amino acids from protein foods into brain chemicals (neurotransmitters and hormones)</i>	
Magnesium (mineral) Also protects neurotransmitters from damage	Peanuts, bananas, milk, wheat germ, spinach, whole wheat bread, pecans, cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, etc.), beans, lentils, chocolate
Iron (mineral) Also aids neurotransmitter activity	Spinach, kale, meat, legumes, apricots, raisins, pumpkin seeds, whole wheat bread, nuts
Calcium (mineral)	Yogurt, milk, many soy products, blackstrap molasses, figs, almonds, sesame seeds
<i>Lipids (fats & fat-like substances): used to make and protect cell membranes of brain chemicals</i>	
Essential Fatty Acids (omega-3 fats)	Cold-water fish (salmon, tuna, herring, etc.), walnuts, soybeans, flaxseeds, hempseeds, purslane
Choline/lecithin (fat-like substance)	Egg yolk, peanuts, wheat germ, soybeans, nutritional or brewer's yeast
<i>Other Nutrients Linked to Mood</i>	
Vitamin D	Egg yolk, fatty fish, milk and other fortified foods (bars, juices, yogurt, etc.)