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Ashleigh's mission is to help people achieve optimal health and sustainable wellness by sharing the expertise she's accrued over more than 10 years as a dietitian and nutritionist. To find out more visit feedyourfuturedietetics.com

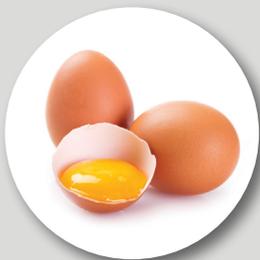


GOOD FOOD

FOR GOOD MOOD



You probably know that what you eat affects many things in your body, but are you aware of how much it affects your brain and, therefore, your mood? Nutrition expert **Ashleigh Feltham** explains.



There is growing evidence that eating a diet that is balanced and includes whole grains, lean meats especially fish and fruit, low fat dairy, fruits and vegetables improves overall health and wellbeing. These food groups are also important for your brain as well; and the great news is, you don't need to wait months or years to experience their positive impact. This is because when you eat fruits and vegetables the effects on your brain are suggested to almost immediately improve your mood.

Foods to avoid

You may not be aware eating a diet of processed foods, or one that is high in saturated fat/sugar/salt can negatively affect your brain – and fast! The part of your brain that stores memories and influences your mood, is called the 'temporal lobe' and when you eat a diet that contains too much of these types of foods, part of the temporal lobe – called the 'hippocampus' – is hit hard. What happens is the proteins that promote the new cells in your brain (called 'neurons') are inhibited from forming, which in turn, can also affect the way your brain processes information. You may be thinking these not so positive effects won't happen to you if you eat a highly processed, saturated and trans fatty diet (e.g. cakes, chips, pizza, cookies, pies) for a month or so right? Unfortunately not; these effects can start happening as fast as a week after starting to consume a diet filled with these 'sometimes' foods'.

Foods to eat

Foods that may elevate your mood include leafy greens and broccoli, berries (particularly blueberries), walnuts, almonds,

hazelnuts, eggs, grain bread, red meat, green tea, coffee, seaweed, lentils, beans, chickpeas, turmeric, dark chocolate, flaxseeds, chia seeds, pumpkin seeds, pecans, edamame, canola, walnut oil, flaxseed oil and seafood (mussels and oysters), particularly fatty sources like salmon.

These foods can improve your brain's health in many ways because of the nutrients (such as the omega-3 fatty acids in salmon) support your brain to function optimally. There is growing evidence that a healthy diet, and particularly eating seafood, may prevent or improve the symptoms of depression. This said, regardless, of whether you suffer from depression or not, aim to eat two to three servings of 100g of fish a week and more of the mood-boosting foods mentioned here, and you will be doing good things for your brain.

For fans of fermented foods, miso, kimchi and sauerkraut are also considered effective mood boosters, thanks to their probiotic and prebiotic nutrients, which can influence intestinal microbiota in the gut and positively influence the gut-brain connection, thus also reducing depression and anxiety.

The take home message here is to enjoy your 'sometimes food' as just that: sometimes – such as once a week. A balanced diet is one where you are not restricted to enjoy and taste the foods that you love, but be mindful of the after-effects on your body and brain. The key to optimal mood, brain and gut health is to avoid consuming foods every day that are meant for moderation. ⚠

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