



Brampton: 220 Wexford Road Unit 2 Brampton, ON L6Z-4N7

Ph: (905) 840-WELL Fax: (905) 840 -LIFE

www.drjustineblainey.com

www.blaineywellness.com

Eating the Right Foods Can Give Your Mood a Boost

By: Dr. Mercola | November 30th, 2017

The connection between your food and mood has come under increasing scientific scrutiny in the past couple of decades. William Dufty brought early attention to this link with his book, “Sugar Blues.” Written over 30 years ago, it has become a classic. Another classic is “The Omega-3 Connection,” written by Dr. Andrew Stoll, published in 2001. This was one of the first books to bring attention to and support the use of omega-3 fats for depression.

It’s really unfortunate that so few people consider how their diet may be influencing their mood, seeing how it can indeed have a pronounced effect on your mental health. For example, research has shown that unprocessed foods, especially fermented foods, help optimize your gut microbiome, thereby supporting optimal mental health.

Dark chocolate, coffee, animal-based omega-3 fats and the anti-inflammatory spice turmeric (curcumin) also tend to boost your mood, whereas sugar, wheat (gluten) and processed foods have been linked to a greater risk for depression and anxiety.

Mental Health Is Worsening Around the World

According to the World Health Organization, depression is now the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide, affecting an estimated 322 million people globally, including more than 16 million Americans, 6 million of whom are seniors. Statistics also reveal we’re not being particularly effective when it comes to prevention and treatment. Worldwide, rates of depression increased by 18 percent between 2005 and 2015.

According to the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health, 11 percent of Americans over the age of 12 are on antidepressant drugs. Among women in their 40 and 50s, 1 in 4 is on antidepressants. While these drugs are prescribed for conditions other than depression, their widespread use suggests mental health problems are indeed pervasive.

In the U.S., suicide rates have also steadily risen since 2000 — a trend blamed on the effects of social isolation, economic pressures, opioid addiction and limited access to mental health care. Considering these facts, it would make sense to be proactive about your mental health, and this includes taking a cold, hard look at your diet. Are you eating foods that increase your chances of feeling calm and content, or is your diet a recipe for doom and gloom?

Key Dietary Recommendations for a Sunny Disposition

A paper published in Nutritional Neuroscience in April this year looked at evidence from laboratory, population research and clinical trials to create “a set of practical dietary recommendations for the prevention of depression, based on the best available current evidence.”

This is sorely needed, as psychiatrists do not currently have any established dietary guidelines to follow in the treatment of depression. Chances are, many patients might never resort to medication were they to receive proper dietary guidance.

According to this paper, the published evidence reveals five key dietary recommendations for the prevention of depression:

1. Following a “traditional” dietary pattern such as the Mediterranean, Norwegian or Japanese diet
2. Increasing consumption of antioxidant-rich fruits, vegetables, legumes, wholegrain cereals, nuts and seeds
3. Eating plenty of omega-3-rich foods
4. Replacing unhealthy processed foods with real, wholesome nutritious foods
5. Avoiding processed foods, fast food, commercial baked goods and sweets

What You Don't Eat May Be More Important Than What You Do Eat

Indeed, while there are many “superfoods” known to lower inflammation, improve mitochondrial function and lower your risk of insulin resistance — all of which are factors implicated in depression — what you don't eat may actually be more important than what you do eat. Adding a few superfoods to an otherwise poor diet is unlikely to yield any significant results. So, it's important to realize that unless you get the foundation right, it's going to be a continuous uphill battle.

The simplest, most basic foundation here would simply be to eat real food. This means ditching all processed, prepackaged food items and replacing them with whole foods that you cook from scratch — including condiments and snacks. Your beverage choices may also need an overhaul, as most people drink very little pure water, relying on sugary beverages like sodas, fruit juices, sports drinks, energy drinks and flavored water for their hydration needs. None of those alternatives will do your mental health any good.

Three brain- and mood-wrecking culprits you'll automatically avoid when avoiding processed foods are added sugars, artificial sweeteners and processed vegetable oils — harmful fats known to clog your arteries and cause mitochondrial dysfunction. Gluten also appears to be particularly problematic for many. If you're struggling with depression or anxiety, you'd be well-advised to experiment with a gluten-free diet.

Three Powerful Dietary Interventions

Next, if you're serious about your physical and mental health, consider taking things a step or two further by:

- **Implementing a cyclical ketogenic diet**, high in healthy fats, low in net carbs with moderate amounts of protein. This kind of diet will optimize your mitochondrial function, which has significant implications for mental health. In fact, one noticeable effect of nutritional ketosis is mental clarity and a sense of calm.

The reason for this welcome side effect has to do with the fact that when your body is able to burn fat for fuel, ketones are created, which is the preferred fuel for your brain. Compelling research also suggests a ketogenic diet may reduce your risk of Alzheimer's disease.

- **Intermittent fasting** will also help optimize your brain function and prevent neurological problems by activating your body's fat-burning mode, preventing insulin resistance and reducing oxidative stress and inflammation, the latter of which has been identified as a causative factor in depression.

While you may achieve some of the benefits from intermittent fasting simply by respecting the time boundaries, regardless of the foods you consume, it is far better if you consume high-quality unprocessed food.

- **Water fasting.** Once you're starting to burn fat for fuel, gradually increase the length of your daily intermittent fasting to 20 hours per day. After a month of 20-hour daily fasting, you're likely in good shape to try a four or five-day water-only fast. I now do a monthly five-day fast, as I believe this is the most powerful metabolic health interventions out there.

A five-day fast will effectively clean out senescent cells that have stopped duplicating due to aging or oxidative damage, which would otherwise clog up your optimal biologic function by causing and increasing inflammation.

Five Superfoods for Mental Health

- **Foods high in tryptophan.** Egg whites (eat with the yolks) contain the greatest amounts. Spirulina is second.

- **Spinach and other folate-rich foods.** B vitamins in general are important for psychological well-being, spinach, broccoli, asparagus and turnip greens.

- **Organic dark chocolate.** According to a 2009 study (conducted at the Nestle Research Center in Switzerland), eating 40 grams (1.4 ounces) of dark chocolate per day for 14 days, divided into three daily servings (morning, afternoon and night), reduced levels of stress-related hormones in all participants — even in those who did not report feeling stressed at the outset of the study.