Five Foods That Fight Depression

Let’s redefine a pick me up. Reaching for a cup of coffee or donut is fast and easy, and while the pick me up is quick, you’ll end up paying for it later. Not only do conventionally processed snacks lead to an energy crash later, they have a deleterious effect on your overall health and mood in the long run.

Your gut is the key to overall health and functions like a second nervous system due to the amount of neurotransmitters produced there. Studies are increasingly finding that what you eat plays a huge role in lowering your anxiety and boosting your mood. The more willing you are to choose a healthy, whole-food treat over a nutrient-empty, quick fix, the more you’ll reap the benefits – both now and later.

Here are a few snacks that can bring you the boost you’re looking for.

Chocolate

Let’s start with an easy one… chocolate. Chock-full of antioxidants and capable of delivering the endorphins, dopamine, and serotonin that your brain needs to regulate your mood, chocolate also provides assistance to the cardiovascular system. Not all chocolate is created equal, though! The act of processing cacao can remove or change most of its healthy compounds, and most of conventional chocolate includes detrimental additives like soy lecithin. Chocolates also contain a variety of sugars that disrupt the balance of gut microbes and can create an overgrowth of Candida. Look for raw chocolates that use sweeteners like raw coconut sugars, stevia, or raw honey. The fewer ingredients listed, the more likely you are to reap the benefits of a midday truffle.

Fermented Foods

Social anxiety can be a major downer, but according to a recently published study, people who consume fermented foods might be less likely to experience it. Looking at young adults enrolled in a psychology class, the students who consumed naturally fermented foods like sauerkraut, kimchi, and pickles exhibited fewer symptoms of social anxiety. The students who reported the greatest benefit from the fermented foods were students who were genetically predisposed to social anxiety disorder.

In addition, traditionally fermented foods also benefit your nervous and immune systems, provide beneficial bacteria, and making several nutrients easily digestible. It’s important to choose fermented foods that have been fermented with lactic acid to get all of the benefits from these foods.

Avocado

Who doesn’t love fatty food? We are biologically engineered to want to eat fatty things, which can sometimes lead to trouble, diet-wise. Sometimes experts can’t agree on which fats to eat, but pretty much everyone is cheering on the avocado. You can join us! Filled with protein, loaded with serotonin boosting monounsaturated fats, a great natural source of B vitamins, avocados have a stacked deck when it comes to promoting a good mood. They’re also a versatile addition to any menu. Smoothies, salads, tacos, guacamole, or cut in half and served with a spoon…it’s harder to find something you can’t add avocado to.

Berries

There’s something irresistible about fresh berries. Plump and juicy, with that little burst of sweetness, the different varieties make it easy for everyone to have a favorite.

They’re also a fantastic source of antioxidants. A steady supply of antioxidants has been shown to lower levels of depression in addition to repairing cell damage and helping prevent cancer. They’re also a perfect pick me up, whether tossing back a quick handful of blueberries or blending a decadent raspberry and coconut milk smoothie.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Okay, so omega-3 fatty acids are not technically a snack food. But when a nutrient provides enough dopamine and serotonin to be described as natural Prozac, it’s impossible to not mention it on a list of good mood foods. A review of more than 25 studies over the past 15 years found that people who ate the most fish were 17% less likely to suffer from depression.

Walnuts slow cognitive degeneration and promote sleep. They can triple melatonin levels. Chia, flax, and hemp, the holy trinity of the health nut’s seed shelf, provide fiber, boost brain health, and add a little extra protein to help you feel fuller longer. What gives these foods all of this positive health mojo? Omega-3 Fatty acids!

Fish can be a dicey proposition due to mercury contamination, but incorporating a low-mercury fish like salmon into your rotation can have significant brain benefits.

Sprinkle some flax, hemp, or chia seeds on salads or in smoothies. Mix a container of soaked and sprouted trail mix with extra walnuts to replace a not so happy snack at work. Munch on some smoked salmon.

Make Simple Switches for Big Benefits

Every other ad or commercial suggests that the latest depression medication is all you need to live the life you’ve

always wanted. Choosing health over immediate gratification appears to be a slow process when there is always a new version of the magic mood pill. It seems like a small step to swap out conventional, processed foods for healthy, whole food choices, but every step toward better overall bodily function is a step toward elevating and stabilizing your mood. Be sure to check out *How Candida Leads to Depression, Anxiety, ADHD, and Other Mental Disorders.*

Recommended Supplements:

- Arctic Omega-D – Nordic Naturals (vitamin D and omega 3s)
- Basic B Complex Thorne Research

Recommended Reading:

- *Mental Health, Physical Health & B Vitamins – Nature's Valium*
- *How Candida Leads to Depression, Anxiety, ADHD, and Other Mental Disorders*
- *Natural Remedies for Depression*

Sources:

- *Decreased social anxiety among young adults who eat fermented foods* – Science Daily
- *How Candida Leads to Depression, Anxiety, ADHD, and Other Mental Disorders* – Organic Lifestyle Magazine
- *Fish consumption and risk of depression: a meta-analysis* – Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health
- *Flax, Chia or Hemp Seeds – Which Are Healthier?* – City Girl Bites
- *What's New and Healthy About Avocados* – World's Healthiest Foods