



GOOD FOOD... ...GOOD MOOD

THERE ARE STRONG LINKS BETWEEN WHAT WE EAT AND OUR MENTAL WELLBEING, ACCORDING TO A GROWING BODY OF RESEARCH. WE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF A WHOLESOME DIET.

all systems glow

Australia's No.1 beauty
vitamin gummies*
to support:



Collagen
formation



Healthy hair



Strong nails

With
2500mg
Collagen per
daily dose

With
Biotin
Zinc &
Vitamin C



Nature's Way

Adult **VITA GUMMIES**

Always read the label and follow the directions for use.

*Circana Australia Grocery Pharmacy MAT YTD 10.9.23



We've known for many years that a healthy diet can lower our risk of developing heart disease, diabetes, cancer and more. As the old saying goes, 'You are what you eat'. We know instinctively that food can have an impact on our mood, too, but until recently, scientists weren't sure why.

The first study of its kind to show that changing your diet can significantly improve mental health was The SMILES trial* (with 166 participants) which was conducted by Deakin University's Food & Mood Centre. Another study of more than 10,775 people found that eating ultra-processed foods (UPFs) increases the risk of cognitive decline[†].

"Research has really exploded in this area in the last 10 years," says Amanda Smyth, an accredited practising dietitian. "We used to think that the body and the brain were two separate things," she explains. "We now know that they're linked via the vagus nerve, which acts as a highway carrying messages between your gut and your brain."

So, what should (and shouldn't) we be putting in our shopping trolley to get a mood boost?

GUT FEELING

The key to unlocking better mental wellbeing could lie in your gut

The quality of your diet affects the health of your microbiome, which can, in turn, impact your mental wellbeing.

(intestinal tract), the home of your microbiome. The microbiome is an ecosystem of trillions of live organisms – including beneficial bacteria – that help you digest food and synthesise nutrients.

The microbiome also interacts with metabolism, weight maintenance, the immune system and, crucially, brain function and our mood[‡]. The quality of your diet affects the health of your microbiome, which can, in turn, impact your mental wellbeing.

The 'good' bacteria in the microbiome thrive on fibre-rich whole foods – often referred to as 'prebiotics'. But they're picky eaters. "Different species of bacteria consume different nutrients. If the good bacteria aren't satiated, the balance of 'good' and 'bad' organisms in the microbiome can get out of whack. Supplying your microbiome with a diversity of veggies, fruits and leafy greens is, therefore, very important," advises Amanda.

High-fibre wholegrains – including barley, quinoa, wild rice and oats – also keep the microbiome in check,

she says. "Once a week, I make my own breakfast muesli; a big pot of rolled oats, mixed nuts, sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds. Every day I add a different fruit. So, I'm getting 10 different plant foods without really trying."

Fermented foods, such as sauerkraut, yoghurt, kefir and kombucha, are also beneficial for your microbiome. These contain live cultures called probiotics. In a study by Irish researchers, participants who followed a probiotic- and prebiotic-rich diet for four weeks reported feeling less stressed[‡]. >



THE FEEL-GOOD FOOD GUIDE

Here's a guide of what to aim for daily (taken from the SMILES trial diet study).

WHOLEGRAINS 5-8 serves per day (1 serve = 1 slice wholegrain bread, ¼ cup muesli, ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, quinoa)[†]

VEGETABLES 6 serves per day (1 serve = 75g veggies, e.g. ½ cup cooked green or orange veggies or 1 cup raw salad veggies)

FRUIT 3 serves per day (1 serve = 150g, e.g. 1 medium apple or 2 small apricots)

LEGUMES 3-4 serves per week (1 serve = 1 cup cooked or canned lentils, chickpeas)

LOW-FAT, UNSWEETENED DAIRY FOODS 2-3 serves per day (1 serve = 1 cup cow's milk, 2 slices hard cheese, ¾ cup yoghurt)

RAW, UNSALTED NUTS 1 serve per day (1 serve = 30g nuts, seeds or nut butters)

FISH at least 2 serves per week (1 serve = 100g cooked fish fillet or 1 small can)

LEAN RED MEAT 3-4 serves per week (1 serve = 65g cooked beef, lamb, veal, pork)

CHICKEN 2-3 serves per week (1 serve = 80g cooked chicken or turkey)

EGGS up to 6 per week (1 serve = 2 large eggs)

OLIVE OIL 3 tablespoons per day



TAME THE TREATS


A diet that's high in ultra-processed or 'junk' food may also have some influence on our mood. "There is growing evidence demonstrating an association between high consumption of ultra-processed foods (which include sweet snacks, ready-to-eat meals and sauces, ultra-processed dairy products, processed meats and artificially

sweetened beverages) and reduced mental and physical health," says Dr Wolfgang Marx, a senior researcher at Deakin University's Food & Mood Centre and President of the International Society for Nutritional Psychiatry Research. "It is important to note, however, that [the research] looks at diets that habitually consume high levels of these types of foods, so occasional sweets or a weekend takeaway are not too much of a concern."





FOCUS ON HEALTH

While a healthy diet can be a real game-changer, it's important to remember that it's not a magic fix. It's one pillar of a healthy lifestyle, which also includes getting regular physical activity and focusing on good quality sleep. Whatever your health concerns may be, you should always consult your GP before making any changes to your diet. 

-Nutrition Journal, January 2020 *dietitiansaustralia.org.au ^ American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, March 2023
† The Cureus Journal of Medical Science, October 2022 ‡ The Journal of Nutritional Biochemistry, Vol 99, January 2022

10 foods that could help *lift your mood*

Cow's milk

"This contains the amino acid tryptophan which helps produce 'feel-good' compounds serotonin and melatonin in the brain," says Dr Marx.

Red meat

Amanda recommends consuming small amounts of red meat with the fat removed before cooking. "Iron is very important for our mental health," she says. Plant-based sources of iron include dark leafy greens and red kidney beans.

Extra-virgin olive oil

Drizzle on your salads and roasted vegetables for a dose of antioxidants and polyphenols. "I use olive oil for salad dressings," says Amanda.

Yoghurt

A Japanese study found that downing probiotic-rich yoghurt may lead to better mental wellbeing-.

Legumes

When eaten as part of a healthy diet, legumes such as lentils and chickpeas are linked to better mental health, according to Dietitians Australia*.

Kefir

"Rich in probiotics, it's easy to incorporate this fermented, yoghurt-like food into smoothies

or breakfast cereal," says Amanda.

LSA

"Sprinkle gut-friendly LSA (a combo of ground linseeds, sunflower seeds and almonds) onto yoghurt or add it to banana bread when baking," suggests Amanda.

Blueberries

Snacking on blueberries could boost memory and cognition, as well as lower blood pressure, UK researchers found[^].

Salmon

Dr Marx recommends eating oily fish such as salmon and sardines, which are both good sources of anti-inflammatory omega-3 fatty acids, which may help to promote brain health[†].

Dark chocolate

Enjoying 30 grams of 80 per cent cocoa dark chocolate daily may improve mood, according to a study by Korean researchers[‡].

