

We all want to feel good, and food plays a major role in how we feel. Our eating habits affect our mood, which in turn affects our food choices. Learn to eat smarter and break free from the vicious circle of bad moods and poor food choices!



Kick Your Cravings

Recognize emotional eating, and nip it in the bud. Do you find comfort in a bag of chips after a stressful day? Do you eat when you're bored, upset, or tired? Do you eat sweets because you crave them? The first step to overcoming emotional eating is to be aware of your behaviors.

Become a writer. Keep track of your eating habits so you can recognize patterns and act on them.

Identify triggers. Try to pinpoint problem areas in your environment and daily routine that promote unhealthy behaviors.

Avoid the "hunger danger zone." When you let yourself get too hungry, it is much more difficult to make healthy choices. Plan regular meals and snacks, based primarily on whole foods to help keep you energized, satisfied, and well-nourished, and prevent overeating for good.

Remove visual cues. What sorts of visual cues (e.g. food on the counter) encourage you to eat? Once you know the triggers, you can remove them.

Practice "mindful eating." If you focus on the food you are eating, you will likely eat less and enjoy it more. Don't multitask during mealtime!

Portion patrol. Eat your food off of a plate, rather than eating directly out of the bag or container.

Keep food in the kitchen or dining areas. Do not eat at your desk, by the TV, or at your computer.

Get moving. Regular exercise often helps keep cravings in check and boosts your mood to boot.

Take action. When cravings strike, do something that's good for your mind and body. Go for a walk, stretch, make a call, read your favorite book or magazine, drink a glass of water or seltzer with lime, listen to music, join a class, write down your feelings in a journal, meet up with a friend, brush your teeth, or if you're really hungry, enjoy a healthy snack.

Mend Your Mood

Bring on the carbs!

Carbs from food provide glucose, which is brain power! Feeling focused, energized, and at ease comes when there's an adequate supply of blood glucose to the brain. "Good" carbs – those found in whole plant foods – provide glucose you need for brain power and feeling good!

Sugar: a short-term fix

While eating sugary sweets may boost your mood in the short term because it can raise the amount of feel good chemical called serotonin in the brain, in the long term it is likely to make you feel tired, irritable, and possibly even hungry again. Get off of this rollercoaster by choosing a diet rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, heart healthy fats, and plenty of water.

Aim for omegas

The brain is 60% fat, and requires a hefty amount of omega-3 fats to stay healthy. The problem is, most people don't get enough omega-3 fats in their diet. Research has found that a diet rich in omega-3 fats may help fight depression. Aim for about 1000 milligrams of omega-3 fats a day from foods like fatty fish, flax seeds and flax oil, chia seeds, hemp seeds, leafy greens, omega-3 fortified eggs, walnuts, and canola oil.

The folate factor

While folate, or folic acid, a B vitamin, is good for your heart, it may also help boost mood and help lift depression. Top sources of folate include dark leafy greens, fruits and veggies, beans, and whole grains.

Can the caffeine

Guzzle more than 300 milligrams of caffeine per day and you may be raising your body's stress levels. Caffeine activates our flight-or-flight response, boosting heart rate and blood pressure, and can contribute to stomach upset. Switch to decaf and be sure to drink plenty of water.

