



Best Food for your Best Mood

By: Ntsako Mathye

Date: May 2016

FUTURELIFE® Fun Facts

- Underlying food allergies and intolerances may also play a role in determining our mood
- Dehydration can cause poor concentration and low energy, so ensure you are drinking the recommended 6-8 glasses a day of clean water, thereby also ensuring the elimination of toxins which is important to balance minerals, kidney function and brain function and ultimately our moods.

COMFORT FOOD

Disney movies make me happy, crying babies make sad, sometimes I get angry at the taxi that just cut in front of me, but I've also noticed that a good piece of chocolate or warm macaroni can also quickly change my mood. The concept of *comfort food* has always been a good excuse to indulge in some good food. But food can really affect the way we feel. Research supports the thinking that a relationship exists between our overall moods with the food we eat. ¹

While exercise can also help lift your mood, let's face it: Sometimes you just want to comfort yourself with food. And if there's scientific evidence that some food can alter your brain chemistry then why not? Here are some of the nutrients for a better mood.

MACRONUTRIENTS

Carbohydrates are not the enemy, it is just a matter of choosing the right ones. The link between carbohydrate-rich food and mood is in the amino acid tryptophan. The brain uses tryptophan to make serotonin. Serotonin is a mood regulator and the more the brain has leads to improved mood. Tryptophan is found in protein foods but when we eat protein, tryptophan has to compete with other amino acids to get across into the brain. Eating carbohydrates increases the tryptophan and thus more can get into the brain to help improve mood. When choosing carbohydrates, choose wholegrains that have had minimal processing. ^{2,3}

When it comes to controlling our energy levels and ultimately our mood, balancing our blood glucose levels is vital and the Glycaemic Index (GI) is a great tool. This index classifies carbohydrate containing foods into categories that either result in sustained energy through slow release of glucose into the blood (low GI), intermediate release of glucose into the blood (intermediate GI) and finally immediate, short-lasting energy through fast release of glucose into the blood (high GI). It is therefore recommended that one should generally consume *low GI carbohydrates* ensuring stable

blood glucose levels and ultimately a better mood. Adding protein to meals can also help glucose to be absorbed slower into the blood stream. ⁴

MICRONUTRIENTS

Omega 3 fatty acids help with cell membrane fluidity and are involved in many processes in the brain that are very important to maintain mood. Our body cannot make omega 3 so we need to get it from the food we eat. Several studies recently have suggested that men and women have a lower risk of depression if they eat fatty fish like salmon, which is high in omega-3 fatty acids.²

Omega-3s from fish seem to have positive effects on clinically defined mood swings such as postpartum depression, says Jay Whelan, PhD, head of the department of nutrition at the University of Tennessee. Good sources of omega-3 fatty acids include: Herring, Rainbow trout, Salmon, Sardines and Tuna.

Deficiencies in Iron and Vitamin B12 leads to anaemia, which contributes to low energy levels, so make sure you are eating iron-rich protein sources such as liver as well as green leafy vegetables on a regular basis. Vitamin C assists with the absorption of iron, so try adding some tomatoes or bell peppers to your protein-rich meals. Vitamin B12 is found in meats, fish, poultry, and dairy.⁴

Vitamin D is another micronutrient linked with low mood. Recent studies have shown a link between low serum levels of vitamin D and higher incidences of mood disorders such as PMS, seasonal affective disorder and depression.

Because very few foods contain vitamin D it is recommended we also get it from other sources such as short periods of sun exposure and vitamin D supplements. Vitamin D can be found in foods such as beef liver, cheese, egg yolks and fortified foods such as FUTURELIFE® HIGH ENERGY Smart Food™.

CHOCOLATE IS A GOOD TREAT

Yes Chocolate is good for your mood! Chocolate helps to release endorphins; feel good hormones into the blood stream. Dark chocolate not only makes you feel good but also has heart healthy factors that help lower risk for cardiovascular disease. So grab a little chocolate treat but remember portion control. ⁵

THINGS TO AVOID

- **Alcohol**

We often have a drink or two to feel better but alcohol is a depressant to the brain. Alcohol use has been linked to depressive disorders as well. Ensure you keep your alcohol intake to the recommended amounts and don't overdo it.¹

- **Caffeine**

Caffeine is a stimulant but it can increase irritability by preventing you from falling asleep at night leading to feeling tired. Caffeine can give you a big burst of energy but often leading to a drop in energy and fatigue. Withdrawal symptoms from caffeine make your mood more sour than good.^{1,2}

- **Dehydration**

Dehydration is also a cause of poor concentration and low energy, so ensure you are drinking the recommended 6-8 glasses a day of water, also ensuring the elimination of toxins which is important to balance minerals, kidney function and brain function and ultimately our moods.⁴

CONCLUSION

Carbohydrates, Proteins, Fats, Vitamins and Minerals in the foods we eat help to keep our metabolism, hormones and neurotransmitters (mood chemicals produced in the brain) in balance, which also balances our moods. In contrast to this, consuming too much alcohol, caffeine and sugar may result in low moods due to an inflammatory response in our nervous system.

So, by simply eating your favourite foods, a stimulation to release endorphins may be activated therefore inducing a positive effect on your mood...however, everything in moderation. So choose the Best Foods for your Best Moods!

WHERE DOES FUTURELIFE® FIT IN?

FUTURELIFE® has an extensive range of products that contains all of the nutrients and components important for protecting a good mood. These include low GI carbohydrates, omega 3 fats, iron, vitamin B12 and best of all, many of them are available in chocolate flavour such as FUTURELIFE® HIGH ENERGY Smart Food™, HIGH PROTEIN Smart Food™, Smart Drink™ or Smart Oats® to name a few. You could also make a smoothie to make it even more exciting. Visit our website to read up on all the various products and to find smoothie recipes, www.futurelife.co.za.



REFERENCES

1. <http://dujs.dartmouth.edu/2011/02/you-are-what-you-eat-how-food-affects-your-mood/#.V01cOfI97IU>
2. <http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/how-food-affects-your-moods?page=1>
3. <http://www.healthline.com/health/mood-food-can-what-you-eat-affect-your-happiness#2>
4. Krause's Food and Nutrition Therapy (Food, Nutrition & Diet Therapy (Krause's) by L. Kathleen Mahan, Sylvia Escott-Stump 16546525
5. <http://www.webmd.com/depression/features/foods-feel-better?page=3>