

Foods That Promote Happiness

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If you're feeling as blue as the skies above, you will be happy to know that a few spoonfuls of the right foods may turn that frown upside down! Whole foods contain vital nutrients that provide both physical and psychological benefits. Read on to discover which foods contain those mood-boosters to help you smile your way to longevity.

Fun with Folate

Eat folate-rich foods: Leafy greens like kale, broccoli, spinach, asparagus, turnip greens, bok choy, legumes, sunflower seeds, oranges, melons, beets, and fortified whole grains

Why? Folate, also known as folic acid, is a water-soluble vitamin that is necessary for cell division, DNA synthesis, and healthy blood cell production. Research at the University of York and Hull York Medical School has found a link between depression and low levels of folate. The recommended daily allowance (RDA) for men and women is 400 micrograms and 600 micrograms for pregnant women. To keep you smiling, increase your intake of folate-rich foods. A cup of cooked lentils provides 90% of the RDA of folic acid. Plus, the fiber and protein will satisfy you longer, stabilize blood sugar, and also promote a better mood. Additional bonuses: Folate can also decrease homocysteine, an amino acid that is linked to heart disease. Low levels of folate can cause anemia, while pregnant women must increase their folate levels to prevent fetal neural tube deficiencies.

Boost Your B6

Eat B6 foods: bananas, chicken breast, garlic, Brussels sprouts, collard greens, sunflower seeds, broccoli, red bell peppers, watermelon, avocados, and potatoes

Why? Vitamin B6 plays a role in red blood cell metabolism, protein metabolism, and synthesis of neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine. It also helps maintain healthy blood sugar levels, and increases the amount of oxygen carried to your tissues. Low levels can lead to an increase of homocysteine, anemia, headaches, and depression. The RDA for adults from age 19 to 50 is 1.3 mg/day and approximately 1.6 mg for individuals over 50. The next time you're feeling down, grab a banana and munch your blues away!

Go Fish!

Eat omega-3-rich foods: fish like salmon, sardines, mackerel, anchovies, and herring, flaxseeds, walnuts, and algae

Why? DHA omega-3 essential fatty acid maintains healthy brain function and is vital for fetal brain and eye development. Current research also demonstrates the association between intake of omega-3 fatty acids and depression. A meta-analysis study published in the Journal of Clinical Psychiatry found that depression was significantly improved in patients with unipolar and bipolar disorders after taking three daily fish capsules for eight weeks. Eat the oily fish listed above -- a 3-ounce serving of salmon contains between 1.1 - 1.9 grams of omega-3 fatty acids. Supplementing with high quality fish oil capsules may be an alternative if you don't consume fish on a regular basis. Vegetarian sources of omega-3 can be found in flaxseeds, walnuts, and algae. Toss a tablespoon of sunflower seeds or walnuts into a creamy cup of unsweetened low-fat yogurt for a mega mood boost!

Good Carbs, Bad Carbs

Eat good carbs: whole grains, fruits, vegetables

Why? Not all carbohydrates are created equal. Whole grains, fruits, and veggies supply us with prolonged energy, fiber, and multiple nutrients that our bodies need for optimal health. Good quality carbohydrates can also trigger serotonin synthesis. Recognized as the "happy hormone," serotonin is an important neurotransmitter that affects our mood and sleep. The next time you feel blue, instead of reaching for that bag of chips or sugary cookies, opt for unrefined, unprocessed carbohydrates that will provide you with sustained energy and an improved mood. Toss that muffin and enjoy a whole grain cracker with a tablespoon of natural nut butter for a delicious and uplifting snack!

You can find many more ways to live to 100 in *Secrets of Longevity: Hundreds of Ways to Live to Be 100*, which is now available on Kindle. Also, check out my new book *Secrets of Longevity 8-Week Program*, a journal that offers the best healthy habits to live to 100.

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I hope you eat foods for many long, happy years. I invite you to visit often and share your own personal health and longevity tips with me.

May you live long, live strong, and live happy!

— Dr. Mao

This blog is meant to educate, but it should not be used as a substitute for personal medical advice

[Submitted by Radical Red]