

# MANAGE YOUR STRESS FOR OPTIMAL LIVING

Feeling stressed? Our food choices can help keep stress in check. Make sure to load up on plenty of these stress busting nutrients and foods!

## Omega-3 Fats

These fats are primarily present in the brain and play a role in mood and preventing depression. The anti-inflammatory properties can help relieve stress in the body. Best food sources include:

- Fatty fish, such as salmon, mackerel, tuna, or sardines
- Nuts and seeds, such as walnuts and flaxseeds
- Omega-3 enriched egg yolks

## Folic Acid

Low levels of folic acid are related to stress, depression, and anxiety. Folate is linked to the production of some of the 'feel good' chemicals in the brain, such as serotonin. Boost your folic acid intake with these foods:

- Leafy greens, such as spinach, kale, broccoli, or Swiss chard
- Sunflower seeds
- Soybeans, beans, and legumes
- Fruits such as oranges, bananas, lemons

## Selenium

Too little may have a negative impact on your mood. Individuals suffering from too little selenium have been shown to be more anxious, irritable, hostile, and depressed than their non-lacking counterparts. Get more selenium by consuming these foods:

- Brazil nuts
- Seafood and shellfish such as tuna, shrimp, and swordfish
- Chicken
- Sunflower seeds

## Magnesium

Magnesium is a crucial nutrient for our mental health. It helps to regulate our emotions and helps to balance mood. A deficiency can lead to irritability, fatigue, and predispose us to stress. Magnesium also plays a role in the production of serotonin, our mood-regulating hormone. High stress levels can also impair our body's ability to absorb magnesium. Eat more of these foods to boost your magnesium levels:

- Almonds
- Spinach
- Legumes such as peanuts and edamame
- Pumpkin seeds
- Dark chocolate

## Potassium

Low levels can cause mental fatigue, stress, and anxiety. Get potassium from these foods, including:

- Bananas
- Potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Pumpkin Seeds

## Vitamin D

Vitamin D deficiency has been linked to depression and other mood disorders since there are Vitamin D receptors in the area of the brain that affects depression. Vitamin D may also be linked to the production of serotonin. Vitamin D is known as the “Sunshine Vitamin” because you can activate vitamin D in the body through UV light exposure. Aim for 15 minutes a day of sunlight on the skin. You can also get vitamin D from these food sources:

- Dairy foods, such as milk, cheese, yogurt, and cottage cheese
- Fatty fish with bones, such as salmon, anchovies, and sardines
- Egg yolks
- Mushrooms grown in UV light

## Antioxidant-Rich Foods

Diets rich in antioxidants may help manage inflammation associated with depression and other mood disorders. Aim to eat a rainbow of colorful foods primarily from plant-based sources to get a variety of antioxidants. Make sure to load up on these antioxidant rich foods:

- Blueberries
- Beets
- Garlic
- Bell Peppers
- Green Tea

## 5 Steps to a Stress-Busting Eating Plan

**1. Try to eat several times a day:** three meals and one to three snacks. Following a regular eating schedule provides your body—especially your brain—with a steady supply of energy throughout the day. The best diet is rich in complex carbohydrates (whole grains, beans, fruits, and vegetables), with ample lean protein and unsaturated fats.

**2. Include breakfast every day.** The benefits are many, including improved attention span and productivity. Breakfast helps “jumpstart” calorie-burning that will last throughout the day.

**3. Limit sweet and sugar-containing foods.** Replace refined sweets with more nutritious sources of carbohydrates such as fruit, vegetables, yogurt, popcorn, and whole grains.

**4. Limit caffeine-containing beverages including coffee, tea, and colas.** The “kick” is typically short-lived and can leave some people feeling depressed. Caffeine, a known diuretic, can increase the body’s need for water. Most important, too much caffeine can disrupt the delicate balance between sleep and wakefulness.

**5. Drink plenty of water;** aim for eight to ten cups per day. Water is essential for the body and drinking too little can lead to fatigue. Individual fluid needs can vary widely, depending on activity level, environmental conditions at home and work, and whether or not a person sweats profusely. A good rule of thumb to help know whether you are drinking enough is to check the color of your urine. If it is pale, like the color of lemonade, you are probably drinking enough. If it is dark, resembling the color of apple juice, then you need to up your fluids. Water should fulfill at least half of your daily fluid needs. Other good choices include decaffeinated tea, seltzer, diluted fruit juice and other calorie-free beverages.