

How food can affect mood



You've probably heard of, or experienced, the phenomenon of being 'hangry' – when you become irritable or experience anger when you are hungry. In the same way that a lack of food can impact your mood, the food you do consume can have varying impacts on your mood, concentration, energy levels and general wellbeing.

Optimising your food intake

The food you eat (including the type, quantity and timing) can help combat energy slumps, lapses in concentration, mood swings and improve your mental health and wellbeing.

Quantity	Timing	How to
Eat smaller portions frequently throughout the day to maintain your blood sugar levels	Avoid going long periods of time without food as this may cause a drop in blood sugars	Use mealtime as an opportunity to socialise and spend some quality time with people who make you happy
Avoid overeating and large meals as this can make you feel lethargic and uncomfortable	Don't eat too close before going to bed as this can reduce your quality of sleep and interrupt your circadian rhythm	Avoid eating while standing up – take the time to sit down and enjoy your food



Food to boost mood

Foods to avoid

- 1.** Slow-release carbohydrates release energy slowly after you eat so you are less likely to experience energy slumps.

Try quinoa, barley, brown rice, sweet potato, berries, cauliflower, broccoli, tomatoes, pears, prunes or peaches to name just a few.
- 2.** Protein contains amino acids that help increase serotonin – the 'happy hormone' – production. Protein-rich foods include eggs, legumes, fish, and poultry.
- 3.** Omega 3s are 'brain food' and have been shown to protect against depression. To increase your intake, try fatty fish such as salmon or tuna, walnuts, seaweed and flaxseed.

- 1.** Caffeine is a stimulant and is found in more than just coffee. Be aware of your intake of soft drink, tea, coffee and chocolate. Reduce your intake in the afternoon and before bed so your sleep quality is not impacted.
- 2.** Research shows links between diets that are high in sugar and depression. Always check the nutrition label and avoid foods and drinks that are high in sugar – anything with more than 5g of sugar per 100g is considered to be high in sugar.

Foods typically high in sugar include fruit juices, sweet desserts, cereals, chocolates, sauces in jars, sports drinks and low-fat foods.
- 3.** Alcohol is a depressant and can exacerbate symptoms of depression.

Drink responsibly – and aim for less than four standard drinks per day, and no more than 10 standard drinks per week.