

SALTIRE

SAFETY



Improve your
mood with food.

Improve Your Mood

Knowing what foods we should and should not eat can be difficult, especially when the advice seems to change on a regular basis. However, evidence suggests that what we eat may have an impact on both our mental and physical health.

Improving your diet may help you to:

- Improve your mood
- Increase your energy
- Allow you to think more clearly

Eating regularly

You can experience fatigue, irritability, and depression if your blood sugar levels fall. You can help maintain stable blood sugar levels by eating frequently and selecting foods that release energy gradually.

Pasta, rice, oats, wholegrain bread and cereals, nuts, and seeds are examples of foods that release energy slowly.

Quick tips:

- *Eating breakfast gets the day off to a good start*
- *Instead of eating a large lunch and dinner, try eating smaller portions spaced out more regularly throughout the day*
- *Avoid food and drinks which make your blood sugar rise and fall rapidly, such as sweets, biscuits, sugary drinks and alcohol.*



Staying hydrated

If you don't drink enough fluid, you may find it difficult to concentrate or think clearly.

Quick tips:

- *It's recommended that you drink 6-8 glasses of fluid a day*
- *Water is a cheap and healthy option*
- *Tea, coffee, juices and smoothies all count towards your intake (but be aware that these may also contain caffeine or sugar)*

Looking after your gut

Sometimes your gut can reflect how you're feeling emotionally. If you're stressed or anxious this can make your gut slow down or speed up. For healthy digestion you need to have plenty of fibre and fluid. You should also try to exercise regularly.

Healthy gut foods include fruits, vegetables and whole-grains, beans, pulses, live yoghurt and other probiotics.

Quick tips:

- *It might take your gut time to get used to a new eating pattern, so make changes slowly to give yourself time to adjust*
- *If you're feeling stressed and you think it's affecting your gut, try some relaxation techniques.*

Getting enough protein

Protein contains amino acids, which make up the chemicals your brain needs to regulate your thoughts and feelings. It also helps keep you feeling fuller for longer.

Protein is in lean meat, fish, eggs, cheese, legumes (peas, beans and lentils, for example), soya products, nuts and seeds.

Quick tip:

- *Whatever your diet, why not do some research into other foods that contain protein, and find something new to try? For ideas on healthy recipes, visit [NHS Inform](#)*

Eating the right fats

Your brain needs fatty acids (such as omega-3 and omega-6) to keep it working well. So rather than avoiding all fats, it's important to eat the right ones.

Healthy fats are found in oily fish, poultry, nuts (especially walnuts and almonds), olive and sunflower oils, seeds (such as sunflower and pumpkin), avocados, milk, yoghurt, cheese and eggs.

Quick tip:

• Try to avoid anything that lists 'trans fats' or 'partially hydrogenated oils' in the list of ingredients (such as some shop-bought cakes and biscuits). They can be tempting when you're feeling low, but this kind of fat isn't good for your mood or your physical health in the long run.

Eating a healthy diet can do a lot to improve your mood and sense of wellbeing. You can use the tips below to start making positive changes to the way you eat.

Take small steps

Making changes can be really tough – especially if you're feeling low. It might help to start by making small changes rather than changing your whole diet suddenly.

You might not feel better right away, and there may be times when you feel frustrated. But try to keep going! Even making very small changes can make a difference in the long term.

Share meals and cooking

Preparing your own food might feel daunting, but cooking with others can be a lot of fun. Ask your family, friends, colleagues or other social groups to join in – they might be very happy to plan, cook and eat a meal with you.

Take care of yourself

We can often put a lot of pressure on ourselves to eat a healthy diet, but it's also important to enjoy the food you eat and not be too hard on yourself.

Remember that other things can help improve your mental health as well, such as:

- Getting physically active (especially outdoors to boost your vitamin D levels)

- Getting enough sleep
- Maintaining good relationships
- Limiting the amount of alcohol you drink

