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# Food and your mood

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## Summary

- What you eat affects your physical health and your mood and mental wellbeing.
  - Eat a varied, healthy diet including a wide range of vegetables, fruits, legumes (such as chickpeas and lentils), nuts and seeds, fish, wholegrains and unsaturated fats (such as olive oil).
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## Diet, mood and concentration

Did you know that your diet has a big impact on your **mood**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/monitoring-your-mood>)

, your concentration and even your level of happiness?

What you eat not only effects your physical health, but studies now show just how much diet impacts your mood and **mental wellbeing**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/healthy-mind>)

. There's no single super-food that boosts mood – it's about having a varied, healthy diet.

A varied, healthy diet improves your memory, concentration and can even increase your level of optimism and protect you from **depression**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/conditionsandtreatments/depression>)

. In contrast, eating too many **highly processed**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/food-processing-and-nutrition>)

, fried foods or **sugary food**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/sugar>)

and **drinks**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/soft-drinks-juice-and-sweet-drinks-limit-intake>)

has been shown to increase the likelihood of **anxiety**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/conditionsandtreatments/anxiety>)

and increase the risk of developing depression.

## A varied and healthy diet

A varied, **healthy diet**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/healthy-eating>)

includes a wide range of:

- **vegetables**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/fruit-and-vegetables>)

- **fruits**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/fruit-and-vegetables>)
- legumes (such as chickpeas and lentils)
- **nuts and seeds**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/Nuts-and-seeds>)
- **fish**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/fish>)
- **wholegrains**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/cereals-and-wholegrain-foods>)
- **unsaturated fats**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/fats-and-oils>)  
(such as olive oil).

Processed, sugary and high fat foods offer little nutritional value and are best eaten only occasionally and in small amounts.

For children and young people, highly processed, sugary and fried foods have been linked to:

- hyperactivity, aggression and symptoms of **attention deficit hyperactivity disorder**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd>)
- poor concentration and **tiredness**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/fatigue>)  
– which interfere with learning and memory
- depression and anxiety – studies have found that young people with the healthiest diets are considerably less likely to experience depression than those with nutritionally poor diets.

## Gut health and mental health

A varied, healthy diet can feed your gut bacteria, improve **gut health**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/gut-health>)

and help lower inflammation.

Chronic inflammation from an unhealthy diet can lead to many health problems, including depression.

The following can all contribute to chronic inflammation:

- **stress**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/stress>)
- **insomnia**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/sleep-insomnia>)
- lack of **exercise**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/keeping-active>)
- **smoking**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/smoking-and-tobacco>)

Find out more about **how your gut health can influence your mental health**

(<https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au/health-advice/mental-health-including-anxiety-and-depression>)

## Sugary drinks and mental health

Having one or more sugary drinks (such as soft drinks, cordials, energy drinks, sports drinks) each day is associated with poorer mental health.

In addition, energy drinks (containing **caffeine**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/caffeine>)

and other ingredients such as taurine and **B vitamins**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/vitamin-b>)

, ginseng and guarana) have been linked to insomnia, increased stress and depression.

## A healthy diet helps treat depression

Eating a varied, healthy diet (and avoiding highly processed unhealthy foods) has been shown to be important in treating depression.

Studies have demonstrated that depressive symptoms can be relieved through diets. One study showed that a third of people with depression experience full relief of their symptoms after improving their diet.

## How you eat is important too

It's not only what you eat, but also how you eat that makes a difference to your wellbeing.

Food helps us connect with others, our community, our culture and our land. Celebrating where your food comes from, how you prepare it and who you share it with are wonderful ways to enjoy food, eat healthier and boost your wellbeing:

- Take the time to step away from the screen, sit down and enjoy food wherever you can.
- **Share a meal**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/healthy-cooking-tips>)  
with a friend, family member, neighbour or work colleague.
- Growing your own food can bring a great sense of satisfaction, make you feel more connected to your food, and help you to be active and feel more relaxed.

## Where to get help

- **Your GP (doctor)**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/serviceprofiles/general-practitioner-services>)
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-hubs>)  
Tel. 1300 375 330
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals**  
(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mental-health-wellbeing-locals>)  
Tel. 1300 375 330
- **Beyond Blue**  
(<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>)

Tel. 1300 22 4636

- **Lifeline**  
(<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>)  
Tel. 13 11 14
  - **Dietitians Australia**  
(<https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au/health-advice/mental-health-including-anxiety-and-depression>)  
Tel. 1800 812 942
  - **The Good Mood Food**  
(<https://www.thegoodmoodfood.com.au/>)
  - **Food and Mood Centre**  
(<https://foodandmoodcentre.com.au/>)
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<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/healthy-eating>

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