

Diet

By Shara Aaron, M.S., R.D.

The Good Mood Diet

Drop 10 Pounds in 5 Weeks and *Feel Great*

Lift your spirits and lose weight. Dip strawberries in dark chocolate syrup and top a garden salad with grilled shrimp.

Who says dieting has to be difficult? You'll never feel deprived on this plan, which can actually lift your spirits while helping you lose weight. You'll be snacking on whole wheat toast drizzled with honey, and mocha cappuccinos (made with skim milk). Research shows that treats like these—along with seafood, cheese and chocolate—may improve your mood.

Here's how it all works: Based on current research, our Good Mood Diet is a 1200- to 1300-calorie weight-loss plan incorporating the nutrients and foods that will help keep you cheerful. You'll lose one to two pounds a week on this regime. It is vital that you eat regularly (every four to five hours). To keep blood

sugar, and mood, on an even keel, make sure that you don't skip meals. So feel great and lose weight starting now!

Satisfy Your Carb Craving

The intense desire for a particular food leads down one path, straight to carbohydrates. Larry Christensen, Ph.D., chair of the department of psychology at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, believes that carbohydrate cravings are a real phenomenon. In his study published in the journal *Appetite*, 90 percent of the women who craved carbohydrates, such as desserts, pasta and bread, reported improved mood and increased feelings of satisfaction, relaxation and energy after eating them. Dr. Christensen says that the reason carbohydrates are so sought after is not completely understood. However, it's clear that people tend to feel better after

consuming them and therefore use carbohydrates as a sort of medication when they are feeling low.

Not all carbohydrates pack on pounds. The right ones will fill you up and aid in weight loss. Half a wheat bagel with fruit preserves may give the same mood boost without increasing the waistline, says Elizabeth Somer, R.D., author of *Food & Mood* (Henry Holt & Co.). For sustained energy she suggests staying away from high-fat carbohydrates such as doughnuts or cake and having complex carbohydrates like whole grains or potatoes.

Feel Fine with Fish

Fish has long been touted as a brain food, but perhaps its nickname should be changed to mood food. Research indicates that consuming foods high in omega-3 fatty acids, including shellfish

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Start your day with a mood boost by putting a little chocolate milk in your coffee.



Five Days of Spirit-Lifting Menus

Day 1: 1,290 Calories

Breakfast

1 c coffee mixed with 1 Tbsp chocolate milk; 2 slices whole wheat toast with 2 slices (1½ oz) low-fat cheese melted on top; 8 oz nonfat, "light" yogurt

Lunch

1 c calcium-fortified orange juice; large garden salad topped with 3 oz grilled shrimp and 2 Tbsp nonfat salad dressing; small whole wheat roll

Snack

1 sliced apple drizzled with 2 tsp honey; 1 c sugar-free hot chocolate

Dinner

1 serving Honey-Mustard Salmon;* 1 c steamed broccoli; ½ c cooked brown rice; ½ of 1.45-oz dark chocolate bar

Day 2: 1,242 Calories

Breakfast

1 c hot tea; 1 c whole grain flake cereal with 1 c skim milk; 1 c calcium-fortified orange juice

Lunch

½ whole wheat pita with 2 Tbsp hummus (chickpea spread); 1 c black bean soup; 1 c baby carrots

Snack

1 Tbsp chocolate fudge syrup drizzled over 1 medium orange

Dinner

1 serving Savory Dijon Pork Loin;* 1 small baked potato topped with 1 slice (¾ oz) low-fat cheese; ½ c green peas; ½ c low-fat chocolate frozen yogurt

Day 3: 1,257 Calories

Breakfast

1 c brewed coffee; Egg Muffin: 1 scrambled egg (with nonfat cooking spray) topped with 1 slice (¾ oz) low-fat cheese on 1 whole wheat English muffin; 1 medium orange

Lunch

1 c minestrone soup; 6 whole wheat crackers topped with 2 Tbsp nonfat cottage cheese; 1 c skim milk

Snack

1 c hot tea; 3 c air-popped popcorn (use nonstick spray

and season as desired)

Dinner

1 serving Spinach-Filled Chicken;* ½ c cooked brown rice; garden salad topped with slices of 1 medium apple; 1 Tbsp nonfat salad dressing; 2 small peppermint patties

Day 4: 1,252 Calories

Breakfast

1 small toasted bagel with 2 tsp honey drizzled on top; 1 c skim milk with 2 tsp chocolate syrup; 1 medium orange

Lunch

1 c sugar-free iced tea; 3 oz grilled tuna topped with mango salsa (½ c mango mixed with 2 Tbsp salsa); large garden salad with 2 Tbsp nonfat salad dressing; 1 whole wheat roll

Snack

½ c sugar-free chocolate pudding (made with skim milk) topped with 2 Tbsp low-fat whipped topping

Dinner

Pasta Primavera: 1 c cooked whole wheat spaghetti topped with 1 c mixed vegetables,

2 Tbsp reduced-fat mozzarella cheese and 1 tsp Parmesan cheese; 1 c skim milk

Day 5: 1,211 Calories

Breakfast

1 packet instant oatmeal made with water; Mocha Café Au Lait: ½ c coffee, ½ c skim milk, 1 tsp chocolate syrup; 1 small banana

Lunch

Red Pepper Sandwich: 2 slices whole wheat bread, 2 slices reduced-fat American cheese, ½ of a roasted red pepper, lettuce, tomato slice; 1 c baby carrots; 8 oz plain nonfat yogurt with 1 tsp chocolate syrup

Snack

16 animal crackers; 1 c hot tea

Dinner

Teriyaki Stir-Fry: 3 oz shrimp, 1 c string beans and 2 Tbsp teriyaki sauce sautéed using nonstick cooking spray; ½ c cooked brown rice; ½ c pineapple with 1 Tbsp chocolate syrup drizzled on top

*For starred items, see recipes, page 144.

and fatty fish, has a beneficial effect on mood, says Peter Rogers, Ph.D., a psychologist at the University of Bristol in England who studies food and mood. In fact, in comparing people on a typical low-fat diet with those on a low-fat diet high in omega-3 rich foods, Dr. Rogers found that those on the omega-3 plan had improved feelings of well-being.

Population studies also show lower rates of depression in societies that consume high amounts of fish, such as those that eat a Mediterranean-style diet. As an important component of the cell membrane, fatty acids are vital to the functioning of brain cells. Consuming only a small amount of oily fish and omega-3 fatty acids, as people typically do in the United States, has a negative impact on brain cells and can lead to depression.

Including omega-3 fatty acids in your diet can be as simple as topping a salad with grilled shrimp or canned tuna or trying ready-prepared salmon burgers. Start with a once-a-week commitment, such as dinner on the

day you grocery shop (so the fish is fresh), and increase gradually to three to four times a week.

Drink Coffee and Smile

Every coffee drinker knows that skipping that morning cup of joe can negatively affect mood. However, did you know that indulging your caffeine craving can actually brighten your day? Studies show that in moderate doses coffee, as well as other items with caffeine like tea, chocolate and cola, have beneficial effects on mood and enhance vigor, efficiency and energy. Caffeine blocks the effects of adenosine, a natural sedative present in the brain that makes you sleepy.

But put a cap on your caffeine consumption, says Somer. Dosages above 500 mg, the amount in about four cups of coffee, show adverse effects on mood, like grogginess. Harris Lieberman, Ph.D., a psychologist at the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine who studies caffeine and mood, says that having

one or two cups of coffee or tea a day is enough to boost mood. So by all means, drink your two cups of java and let your spirits soar.

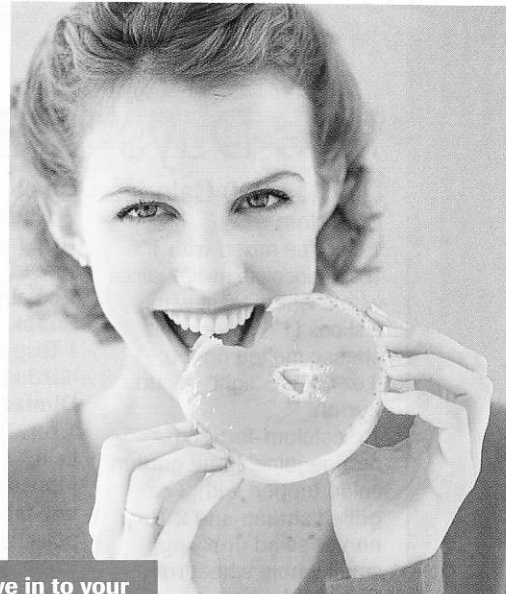
Calm Down with Calcium

Premenstrual syndrome can wreak havoc on women's moods every single month. Research indicates that women who experience symptoms of PMS, like moodiness, may have an underlying condition in which calcium isn't used properly by the body during times of low estrogen in the menstrual cycle. Fortunately you can relieve premenstrual blues by consuming foods high in calcium such as skim milk, low-fat cheese, yogurt and calcium-fortified orange juice. Clinical trials on women with PMS have found that increasing calcium consumption to 1000 mg a day effectively alleviates many of the mood symptoms including depression and anxiety.

You can get a hefty amount of the mineral in just three daily servings of calcium-rich foods. Each cup of milk,

The Feel-Good Fitness Connection

There is no doubt that exercise reduces stress and lifts mood. The release of endorphins during exercise causes a post-exercise reduction of muscle tension and a feeling of calmness. People also tend to have an improved body image when they begin a consistent exercise program. The good news is you don't have to spend all day in the gym to feel better. A recent study published in the journal *Health Psychology* indicates that improvements in vigor and mood occur after just 10 minutes of exercise. To maximize the health and psychological benefits, exercise in several 10-minute bouts a day. A brisk walk in the morning, afternoon and evening is all you need to feel your best.



► **Diet** Continued from page 81
fortified orange juice or yogurt gets you about 300 mg, and two slices of low-fat cheese provide 236 mg.

Eat Chocolate to Be Cheerful

To any chocoholic—and let's face it, who isn't one—it may come as no surprise that chocolate is the most sought after food when mood is low. It is the ultimate mood booster. Chocolate contains the optimal combination of sweet flavor and creamy texture to cause a very effective release of mood-elevating endorphins. "Consuming chocolate hits a physiological button in the brain and triggers pleasure," says David Benton, Ph.D., professor of psychology at the University of Wales in Swansea.

Although chocolate is high in fat and calories, the American Dietetic Association recognizes that cravings for it are real and assures us that including the sweet in a sensible diet is very possible as long as portions are kept under control. Good lower-fat chocolate choices: fruit dipped in Hershey's dark chocolate syrup, chocolate pudding made with low-fat chocolate milk, mini chocolate chips used in place of regular ones in baking.

Boost B₁ and Be Happy

Due to our increasing reliance on highly processed foods, Americans may be missing nutrients that occur naturally in whole foods. With some vitamins, like B₁, even a marginally too low intake may cause moodiness.

Vitamin B₁, or thiamin, serves an important function in maintaining a healthy nervous system and helps metabolize carbohydrates. In plants

thiamin is in the husk, so it is stripped when flour is processed and is therefore found naturally only in whole grains. (Peas, beans and some types of meat also contain thiamin.) Because thiamin is used up when serving its purpose in metabolism, "many people could be living with low stores of the vitamin," says Dr. Benton. Not a clinical deficiency, but a borderline one. Studies in the United States and abroad have shown that boosting thiamin intake elevates mood, even in women who are not deficient. Women report feeling more composed, clearheaded and energetic after consuming thiamin.

Whether or not low thiamin is causing your negative mood, the sources are nutritious, so increasing your supply will improve your diet. To up your thiamin intake, eat more whole grains, enriched cereals and beans. Lean cuts of thiamin-rich pork may add variety to a healthful diet. If during one day you ate one cup of bran cereal, 3 ounces of pork loin and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of peas you'd get 2 mg of thiamin, the amount that has been reported to elevate mood.

Fight Fatigue with Selenium

A trace mineral known for its role in cancer prevention, selenium also has an important purpose in the brain. Studies show that the brain gets priority during times of low selenium supply, and mental decline has been associated with low selenium levels. In a study conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture, individuals on a high-selenium diet for 15 weeks were more clearheaded, confident and elated than those who were on a low-selenium diet. A similar study in the United Kingdom found that supplementing with 100 micrograms (mcg) of selenium de-

Give in to your craving: Half a bagel with fruit preserves can keep you slim.

creased anxiety, depression and fatigue.

Selenium is found in eggs, poultry, seafood and grains. How much selenium is in a plant food depends on the amount found in the soil in which the food was grown (coastal and Midwestern regions of the United States tend to have low levels in the soil, whereas the Central Plains are rich in the mineral), so intake will vary. Somer suggests taking a multivitamin/mineral with 50 to 100 mcg of selenium as extra insurance. She warns that megadoses (over 500 mcg) in supplements can be toxic. Good sources of selenium: One large egg has 15 mcg, 3 ounces of cod has 40 mcg, 3 ounces of chicken breast has 24 mcg and 2 slices of enriched wheat bread has 20 mcg.

Stay A-O.K. with Five-a-Day

Always nutritional winners for physical health, fruits and vegetables will also keep your mental health intact. Antioxidants in fruits and vegetables protect blood vessels in the brain and have been shown to reduce cognitive decline in the elderly. Researchers suspect that in a similar manner, maintaining healthy blood vessels in the brain will lead to improved psychological function and outlook. Although the mechanism of action on the brain is not completely understood, "for psychological well-being, improved fruit and vegetable intake is a good bet," says Dr. Rogers. For physical and mental health, eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. **FC**



To keep mood on an even keel, have feel-good snacks like apples with honey.