



EATING FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Preventing depression through food



MooDFOOD
PREVENTING DEPRESSION THROUGH FOOD

Your take home insights from research of the MooDFOOD project. Recipes, ideas and tips included

www.moodfood-vu.eu

Did you know that what we eat and drink may help support your mental health?

After extensive research the MoodFOOD project has found that as well as keeping us physically healthy, healthy eating may also support your mental health. It's about what we eat every day, throughout the day. In this booklet we'll take you through the best ways you can make healthyfood choices to support your mental health.



Healthy Eating for Mental Health

Most of us know that healthy eating is good for our health as it keeps our weight in check and can help protect us from heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. But did you know healthy eating can also support your mental health? There are no magic foods, quick fix supplements or special diets needed - it's about making healthy choices throughout the day, every day. This is what we call a 'healthy dietary pattern'.

See our 5 top tips to work towards your own healthy dietary pattern:

1. Eat more

- Vegetables & Fruit
- Legumes
- Fish



2. Choose

- Wholegrain breads & cereals
- Healthy oils



3. Enjoy in moderation

- Poultry
- Dairy products
- Nuts & eggs



4. Eat less

- Red & processed meat



5. Take small steps towards positive changes every day



Tip 1. Eat more

Vegetables, fruits, legumes and fish are all important parts of a healthy dietary pattern which we should focus on eating more of.



Vegetables

Any vegetable is a good vegetable - the more you eat the better! Vegetables are very low in calories and high in vitamins making them the top choice for a mood boosting dietary pattern.



Fruit

Sweeten up your day with fruit! It's packed with fibre and vitamins and makes a great snack.

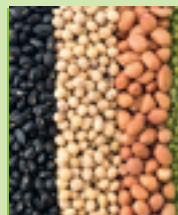
Fish

Fish is a great source of protein and vitamins. Its healthy fats mean eating just one serving of fish a week can improve your heart health. Oily fish like salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring and sardines are a great choice as they are packed with healthy omega-3 fats. Aim for at least one serving a week of sustainably sourced fish.



Legumes

Lots of people struggle with eating more legumes but there are so many reasons to try. They are cheap, versatile, full of fibre and vitamins, make a great substitute for meat, are great for heart and gut health, and an essential part of a healthy dietary pattern.



What are legumes?

Lentils, peas (e.g. chickpeas and split peas like dhal) and beans (e.g. cannellini, soy, kidney, mung, lima and butter beans)

Healthy goals

- ✓ At least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day
- ✓ Eat more legumes (e.g. aim for at least 3 servings a week)
- ✓ Eat at least one serving of oily fish a week



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Tip 2. Make the healthy choice

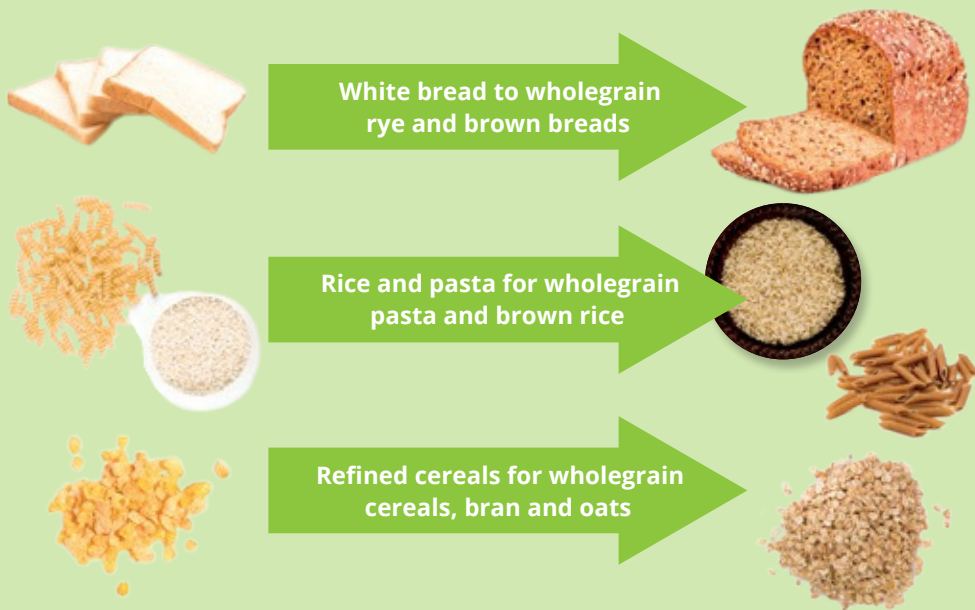
Choosing and eating wholegrain breads and cereals and healthy oils every day is an important part of a healthy dietary pattern.

Healthy goals

- ✓ Eat wholegrain breads or cereals every day
- Use healthy oils
- ✓ every day

Wholegrain breads and cereals

You've probably heard about wholegrains before, so why is everyone recommending them? Wholegrain options contain the healthy fibre and nutrients from grains which keeps us feeling full and energised through the day. Here are some easy swaps:



Healthy vegetable oils

When it comes to fat it's all about choosing the right types of fat. A great way to do this is to swap butter, hard margarines and cooking fats with soft margarines and liquid vegetable oils. Some good choices include olive, rapeseed and sunflower oils. You can use them in cooking and as a dressing for salads.




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Tip 3. Enjoy in moderation

Eaten in the right amounts these foods can be part of a healthy dietary pattern.

Poultry

Poultry like chicken and turkey can make a great alternative to red meat. Choose lean cuts and try to serve poultry with lots of vegetables and legumes.

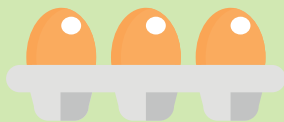


Dairy products

Dairy products include milk, cheese and yoghurt and make an important part of a healthy dietary pattern. Most dietary guidelines recommend 2 servings of dairy products a day.

Nuts

Delicious and nutritious nuts are full of protein, healthy fats, fibre and nutrients. A small amount each day is a great addition to a healthy dietary pattern.



EGgs


A few eggs a week provide a great source of protein, plus an alternative to red meat.

Healthy goals

- ✓ Eat moderate amounts of poultry
- ✓ Eat a small amount of nuts every day
- ✓ Eat dairy products every day
- ✓ If consuming alcohol, aim to cut back this week

Tip 4. Eat less

These foods are not part of a healthy dietary pattern so should be avoided or reduced.

Healthy goals 

✓ Eat less red meat

✓ Avoid processed meats



Cut back on red meat

Low intake of red meat is a key part of healthy dietary patterns which can improve mental health. Work towards eating less red meat (like beef, lamb, and pork). Great swaps can include eggs, fish, nuts and legumes. Cutting back on meat is great for reducing your risk of cancer and heart disease, and reducing your environmental footprint!

Avoid processed meats

Processed meats are not part of a healthy diet and can increase risk for colorectal cancer.



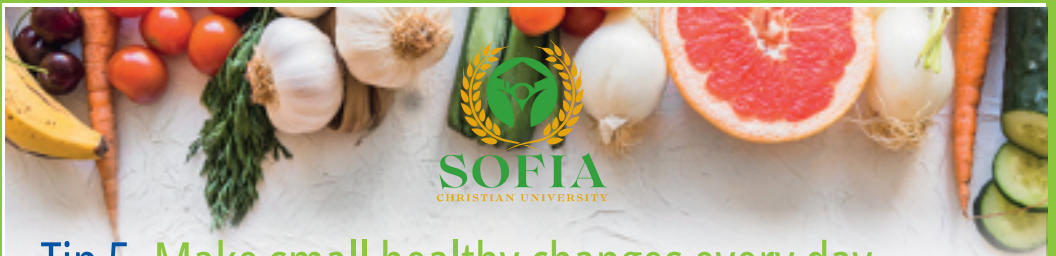
What is processed meat?

Meat which has been cured, dried or salted including ham, salami, bacon, pastrami, sausages (including frankfurters and chorizo) and smoked meats.

Unhealthy foods

While the evidence on the link between unhealthy foods like sugary drinks or sweet, fried and salty foods and depression isn't clear yet - these foods do not form part of a healthy dietary pattern. It's best to limit these foods in line with your national dietary guidelines.





Tip 5. Make small healthy changes every day

Make a change to feel a change! Any positive change, no matter how small, is a great step towards better health. Here are some tips to get started:

Set some healthy goals

Eating vegetables at every meal, eating two pieces of fruit a day, trying a new recipe with legumes each week. Setting healthy goals helps to stay motivated and focused.

Start with positive food goals

The term diet can carry a lot of negative thoughts and behaviours. Start towards a healthier dietary pattern by focusing on the positive's like adding more fruits, vegetables and legumes rather than restricting food.

Gain insights

Keeping a food and mood journal is a great way to gain insights into the link between how you feel and what you eat.

Identify your triggers and plan ahead

Are there seasons, events or stresses that make you feel low or trigger you to reach for unhealthy foods? By identifying what they are you can plan healthy strategies to help tackle them.

Build a support network

Involve family and friends in reaching your healthy goals, everyone can benefit from working towards a healthy dietary pattern.

Be mindful

Remove distractions, focus on the food and enjoy your mealtimes. They're something to look forward to and savour.

Don't let a bad day keep you down



A healthy day

A day of healthy eating can include a lot of different foods and meals, below we've put together just some examples of what it might look like.



Breakfast



Wholegrain toast & spread

or



Porridge with fruit

or



Eggs with wholegrain toast

Lunch



Salad with legumes

or



Sandwiches packed with vegetables

or



Minestrone soup

dinner



Bean Stew

or



Chicken with grains and vegetables

or



Fish and vegetables

snacks



Drinks



Get started

To help you work towards a healthy dietary pattern we've made the healthy checklist below. Choose 3 healthy goals to work on and keep track over the week. You can also make notes of your mood, any triggers you identify or challenges you face, and then reflect on the lessons you've learned and achievements you've made each week.

week 1

	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Mood notes	Challenges & Triggers	Lessons & Achievements
Mon						
Tue						
Wed						
Thu						
Fri						
Sat						
Sun						





You can do it!

The first step is always the hardest, you'll be amazed at what you can achieve!

week 2

	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Mood notes	Challenges & Triggers	Lessons & Achievements
Mon						
Tue						
Wed						
Thu						
Fri						
Sat						
Sun						





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Go green for mental health

A healthy dietary pattern to support your mental health can also help you reduce your environmental footprint. Here are some top tips to help your mental health and the environment:

Healthy goals

- ✓ Don't eat too much
- ✓ Eat more reasonable fruit and vegetables
- ✓ Swap red meat for legumes and vegetables
- ✓ Eat sustainably sourced fish in moderation

Eat and prepare a healthy amount of food

Eating a healthy amount of food can help you maintain or achieve a healthy body weight and reduce food waste.

Eat less red meat

Meat has a greatest impact on the environment compared to all other foods. That's why it's so important to cut back. Poultry has a lower environmental footprint than red meats.

Make smart fish choices

With global fish stocks at risk it's very important to choose sustainably sourced options. Fish can also have a large environmental footprint due to the fishing and transport requirements so it's also important to eat fish in moderation, aim for two servings a week with at least one of oily fish.

Seafood is also a great choice.

Load up on plants foods

Fruit, vegetables and legumes are all crucial for a healthy dietary pattern - and also have a lower environmental footprint than meat and dairy products. Look for options that are environmentally friendly like tasty seasonal fruits and vegetables, field grown tomatoes and frozen fruits and vegetables that cut down on food waste.

Reach Out

If you're feeling down and finding it hard to shift negative feelings you don't have to struggle alone. It's important to seek help. While a healthy dietary pattern may help, it's just one part of the treatment package. Mental health care professionals can help you navigate your symptoms and get the care you need. Talk to your doctor about how you're feeling and they'll be able to refer you to the right services.

