

## 10 Things That Can Increase Your Energy and Improve Your Mood

Is it possible that diet can have a profound effect on physical and mental health. I believe the answer is yes. It has been proven that certain foods have been shown to help combat depression and even mental illness. Good nutrition also reduces stress and can improve sleeping patterns. We all need some foods we can add to our diet that can help us with mood and energy.

1. **Omega 3 fatty acids** are compounds are found in fatty fish like salmon and halibut, flax seeds, chia seeds, walnuts, and olive oil. They can also be purchased in supplement form. Multiple clinical studies have shown Omega 3 fats fight depression. Omega 3 fats can even help combat more severe mental illnesses such as bi-polar disorder. A landmark study by Harvard University showed that bi-polar patients receiving high doses of Omega 3 oils stayed in remission longer and were able to combat depression better. A new study by the Mental Health Foundation shows that fish oils “significantly improve” the behavior of children suffering from ADHD, or attention deficit disorder. And, since these oils are naturally occurring in foods, they are safe for most people to take.

2. **Zinc** is essential for metabolism and digestion. It plays an important role in immune system function and helps fight weakness and fatigue. Zinc deficiencies often result in loss of appetite and irritability. Zinc-rich foods are wheat germ, pumpkin seeds, whole grain wheat bran, and high protein foods.

3. **Vitamin B-3 (niacin)** is essential for energy conversion in the body. Even mild deficiencies can cause depression, irritability, canker sores, and indigestion. If you regularly get canker sores in your mouth and lips, it may be a sign of B-3 deficiency. Excessive alcohol consumption causes vitamin B-3 deficiencies. Natural sources of this vitamin are beets, pork, chicken, dried beans, and oily fish (such as mackerel or salmon).

4. **Water** is absolutely essential for combating depression and fighting fatigue. Water helps improve mood, motor function, mind power, skin problems, and a host of other maladies. Always drink at least 40 ounces of water a day or even better 1/2 your body weight in ounces of water. If you drink soda or coffee, it is good to increase your water intake, since caffeine acts as a diuretic, pulling water from the body. The benefits are enormous, and the cost is minimal. Drink more water!

5. **Vitamin E** occurs naturally in wheat germ, nuts, seeds, and some fruits and vegetables. Vitamin E is a potent anti-oxidant and immune booster. It has been shown to strengthen red blood cells and fight viral infection. It is a good supplement for people with chronic fatigue and depression.

6. **Calcium** can help combat stress and anxiety. Studies have shown that calcium can help combat post-partum depression. Calcium-deficient people regularly complain of difficulty sleeping and cramps. Calcium has the added benefit of being a natural sleep-aid. It is present in milk, cheese, and most dairy products. Non-dairy sources include broccoli, tofu, and fortified orange juice.

7. **Folic Acid** is found in leafy greens, beans, peanuts, orange juice, wheat germ, and many fortified cereals. Researchers know that low levels of folic acid are directly linked to depression. A University of Toronto study showed that patients with higher levels of folic acid in their systems fought depression faster and more successfully than those without it.

8. **Stevia** is a natural sweetener made from a leafy green plant. Stevia has been used for centuries as a natural sweetener in Asia, and many diet sodas in Asia are made with Stevia. Although the sugar and artificial sweetener industry has fought stevia's addition to foods in the United States, it is still freely available in liquid drops, powder, and leafy form for consumers to purchase. Stevia is all-natural, non-caloric, and does not have the same side-effects as refined sugar and other artificial sweeteners.

9. **Vitamin C** is a natural immune-system booster. Depressed people often have suppressed immune systems, and vitamin C rich foods and supplements can help boost your natural immune response. People with vitamin C deficiencies often show signs of depression and stress. Vitamin C is readily available in all citrus fruits and a variety of inexpensive supplements.

10. **Iron deficiency** causes fatigue, low energy, and anemia, especially in women. Always check with your doctor before taking an iron supplement. However, there are many natural sources of iron that are easily added to one's diet without any side effects of a supplement. Good sources of iron include liver, beef, beans, peas, and nuts. It is easier for your body to assimilate iron from meat, rather than vegetable sources. If you are a vegetarian, you can improve your iron assimilation by adding vitamin C to your diet.

### ***Other Possible Causes of Fatigue***

**Food allergies** can also cause a host of problems, including depression and weakness. Sometimes, these allergies are mild and simply cause stomach upset or mood swings. A close friend of mine just recently discovered that chocolate (cacao) was the trigger for her PMS and horrible migraines. After 46 years, she is finally PMS and migraine-free after completely giving up chocolate. Common food allergies include chocolate, wheat, dairy, and soy.

**Avoid Caffeine.** One cup of tea or coffee per day is acceptable, but anything more can cause problems with mood swings, depression, and fatigue. Black tea generally has less caffeine than coffee. If you would like to reduce your caffeine intake, consider switching to tea instead.

**Reduce or eliminate your refined sugar intake.** It may seem difficult at first, but train yourself to eat something else when you crave refined sugar. Delicious sweet strawberries, blueberries, or sliced oranges can ease your sweet tooth and

keep you on track. Avoid sugary foods and cereals, especially in the morning when your blood sugar can spike dramatically. Instead, opt for a protein-rich breakfast with eggs, milk, and sausage, or lean meats, and a piece of fruit, such as a banana. This type of breakfast helps prevent food cravings and mood swings later on in the day.

**Hormone therapy and oral contraceptives** can interfere with the absorption of B vitamins. Women who take an estrogen supplement may want to add a B supplement to their diet in order to combat this interference. Ask your doctor if a B supplement is okay.

Finally, if you are one of the many people that gulp down a cup of coffee in the morning and then realize you are starving at noon, you are doing your body a great disservice every day. Even if you have to force yourself, eat three meals a day, and always start with a good, protein-rich breakfast. If your doctor approves, add some good vitamin supplements to your diet, and drink lots of water. You'll feel better almost immediately, and you may even lose those cravings for unhealthy foods. Take the first step towards better health and a happier life!