Mindful Eating

- It may be helpful to keep a food journal. Include everything you eat and drink, your physical activities and your moods.
- Find out when your stress is most likely to lead to cravings. Anticipate your cravings and have healthy, naturally sweet food such as fruit or yogurt ready.
- If you notice that certain foods seem to be causing mood swings, try avoiding them for a week or so and see if you notice a change.
- What you drink is as important as what you eat. Too much caffeine can contribute to anxiety, nervousness and mood swings. Alcohol can worsen depression, interfere with sleep and make treatment less effective.
- Eating disorders can co-occur with mood disorders. An eating disorder is a separate illness that requires a separate treatment. If you experience drastic changes in weight, and tend to severely restrict your diet or binge and purge, talk to your doctor about treatment for a possible eating disorder. More information is available at www.nimh.nih.gov/publicat/eatingdisorders.cfm.
- If you have frequent cravings, distract yourself by exercising (even a short walk up the stairs or around the block), cleaning your home or another activity.

Meals and Nutrients

Food affects different people in different ways. Excessive amounts of sugar, caffeine, alcohol or chocolate may be more likely to contribute to mood disturbance. Foods such as vegetables, fruit, oil-rich fish and whole grains may be more likely help with stability.

Eating habits that benefit most people include three meals a day (or more than three smaller, nutritious meals spaced evenly throughout the day) at approximately the same times each day. This keeps your blood sugar from rising or falling dramatically. It’s also important to get enough vitamins and minerals. Adequate levels of B-vitamins (including folic acid), vitamin C and zinc are thought to help stabilize mood.

Research on Omega-3 fatty acids is ongoing. They have been found to improve heart health but their effects on mood have not yet been determined. They can be found in fish, soybeans, flaxseed, walnuts and wheat germ, or can be taken in pill form. Talk to your doctor before trying Omega 3 fatty acids or adding any other supplement to your diet.

Crash diets that promise quick weight loss can be tempting, especially when coping with medication-related weight gain, which is both common and frustrating. But completely eliminating any one thing, even fat, from your diet may have negative consequences for your mood and overall health.
We've been there.
We can help.

Food and Mood

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is the leading patient-directed national organization focusing on the most prevalent mental illnesses. The organization fosters an environment of understanding about the impact and management of these life-threatening illnesses by providing up-to-date, scientifically-based tools and information in language the general public can understand. DBSA supports research to promote more timely diagnosis, develop more effective and tolerable treatments and discover a cure for these illnesses. 

DBSA does not endorse or recommend the use of any specific treatments or medications for mood disorders. For advice about specific treatments or medications, individuals should consult their physicians and/or mental health professionals.

20 YEARS • 20 RESOURCES

20 YEARS OF HELP

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