



# Foods to eat and foods to avoid for mental health

Start your journey to mental wellness today

## Welcome

*Hello! I'm guessing you're here because something about how nutritional therapy can be used to boost your mood has piqued your interest! Perhaps we've met in real life, or perhaps someone you trust mentioned my name, or you've seen one of my posts on social media...*

*Whatever brought you here, I am so delighted and grateful that you have downloaded this guide, and I hope that it inspires you to make a change to your nutrition in a way that is supportive of your mental health - not only today but in the future as well.*

*If you like what you see, and you haven't already followed me on social media please do so using the social media links below. I'd love to hear what you think!*

All my best

Dana



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## Foods to eat and foods to avoid for mental health

When you feel down do you often reach for “comfort” foods, foods that are warm, homely, possibly even food that is high in sugar and fat?

Do you lose your appetite when you feel down?

Or lose the will to cook because you just can't muster up the energy for it?

There's probably a link between your eating habits and how you're feeling.

In an article written by Psychiatrist and founder of a Restorative Psychiatry clinic, Dr Brad Zehring, states “There is enough research that suggests a correlation between many mental disorders and poor nutritional intake”.

This can be a chicken and egg situation. You feel bad, so you eat badly and you feel even worse so you seek comfort foods which end up making you feel worse. It's a huge vicious cycle...

What if you could see food as nutrients and a source of nourishment for the body?

My background in Nutrition Science has taught me why food is a source of life –our bodies need nutrients (vitamins and minerals) to perform vital processes in the body.

I'll give one example here. For our bodies to create energy, they use raw materials such as carbohydrates, fat and protein, and through a series of conversion processes, they create what is technically known as ATP – better known as energy.

The conversion processes need micronutrients - namely vitamins and minerals - to work effectively. In this energy cycle, the specific vitamins and minerals that are needed to create energy are iron, magnesium, B vitamins and manganese.

In the same way that our bodies create energy, they also create neurotransmitters, hormones and signalling molecules to help ensure our mental health as well as our physical health.

By now you're probably wondering which foods can support your mental health and which can hinder your mental wellbeing.

My hope is that this guide motivates you to make changes that will support you in nourishing your body and mind and that it will be the start of your mental wellness journey.



**Disclaimer:** The information in this eBook is not intended to diagnose, treat or cure any disease. It is not intended as medical advice or as a substitute for medical advice in any way. The information should be used in conjunction with the guidance and care of your doctor or other qualified health care professional. You should consult your health care provider before undertaking any dietary or lifestyle changes. The material provided in this eBook is for educational and motivational purposes only.

*So let us begin...*



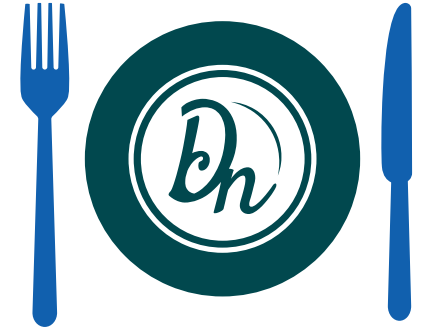
## What to eat?

The foundation of eating for mental health covers 3 important aspects:

- 1 – Providing your body with the nutrients needed for brain and neurotransmitter health
- 2 – Supporting gut health (which affects EVERYTHING in the body!)
- 3 – Supporting the immune system and calming inflammation

### 1 – Nutrients for Brain and Neurotransmitter Health

Neurotransmitters – our happy hormones are created in our bodies from amino acids (which we get from protein). Some of the food sources that support this include:



**Food is our source of life. We eat because we need the nutrients from food to support the body's internal processes that enable us to live, move, breathe, grow, fight infection, think and more!**

**Food is so often forgotten when it comes to mental health, but research is beginning to show that the health of the body is intrinsically linked to the health of the mind, and we all know how important food is for our overall health!**

When you approach your relationship with food as a means to nourish your body, soul and mind, everything changes.

In this guide, you'll learn the things to understand for taking control of your mental wellbeing, including a list of nutrients that your brain and your neurotransmitters (feel-good hormones!) need to function effectively, so they can support your mental health and prevent symptoms of depression, anxiety, burn-out, and low mood.

We will also explore other aspects such as gut health and inflammation as these are also vitally important when it comes to our mental health.

Neurotransmitters (happy hormones)	What they do	How they're made	How to get more of them
Serotonin	It is our mood and emotion stabiliser. This hormone impacts our entire body and promotes the communication between our brain cells and other nervous system cells.	Tryptophan	Salmon, eggs, spinach, nuts and seeds.
Dopamine	This is our movement controller and affects physical functions. It sends signals from the body to the brain.	Tyrosine	Beef, pork, fish, chicken, tofu, milk, cheese, beans, seeds, nuts, and whole grains.
Oxytocin	Meet the love hormone linked with empathy, relationship building and trust.	Taurine	Shellfish, poultry, seaweed, dairy, and beef.
GABA	GABA is an inhibitory neurotransmitter, which means we have a mechanism that helps us calm down naturally. GABA slows down the signals, thereby reducing feelings of overwhelm and anxiety.	Glutamine	Grass-fed dairy products, meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, beans, parmesan cheese, mushrooms and ripe tomatoes.

More...

Neurotransmitters are created when the body converts the amino acids listed above into neurotransmitters. This doesn't happen by magic, but by using nutrients such as vitamins and minerals. To support your body in creating these neurotransmitters, you need to be eating sufficient of the following nutrients:

Essential Nutrients	Type of Food
Vitamin B12	B12 is found in animal products such as fish, poultry, lamb, beef, eggs and dairy.  *B12 cannot be obtained from a vegan diet, so if you are vegan, please do reach out to a health professional - like me for the best B12 supplement for you.  <b><a href="#">Click here to book a call with Dana.</a></b>
Folate	Folate is abundant in green leafy vegetables—stock up on this good stuff.
Vitamin B6	Oats, bananas, spinach, sweet potato, carrots, pork, poultry, organ meats (liver, intestines, offal), fish, soy, dairy, and eggs.
Magnesium	Avocado, nuts and seeds, beans and lentils, dark green leafy vegetables, dark chocolate (85%), tofu/tempeh, whole grains, and bananas.
Vitamin C	Red and yellow peppers, strawberries, blueberries, kiwi fruit, oranges, parsley, kale and broccoli.
Vitamin D	Found in small amounts in salmon, eggs and dairy, but absorbed mainly by sunlight exposure.  I recommend testing vitamin D levels throughout the winter, especially in the Northern Hemisphere, where we do not get enough sunlight exposure. As a top-up, I'd suggest taking a good quality vitamin D supplement, get in touch for my favourite brands.  <b><a href="#">Click here to book a call with Dana.</a></b>



## 2 – Supporting Gut Health

The gut is an important consideration with any health condition, and this is also true for mental health due to the emerging research into the field of the gut-brain axis.

Many studies have confirmed connections between the brain and gut health – with changes in gastrointestinal (GI) function and GI symptoms being accompanied by central nervous system (CNS) disorders. Approximately 44% of people with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) suffer from anxiety and about 30% of people with IBS suffer from depression. This isn't a coincidence!

The gut microbiome (the 37 trillion bacteria, fungi and viruses that live inside our gut), is emerging as a key regulator of the gut-brain axis. Gut microbes themselves can communicate to the central nervous system (CNS) and the CNS in turn can affect the composition of the gut microbiome. There is very much a bi-directional nature between the gut and the brain.

The good news is that in adults it has been shown that the diet has the biggest lifelong influence on the gut microbiome composition. The aim is for a diverse microbiome, which means a gut microbiome that consists of many different species.

### So how do we achieve a diverse and robust gut microbiome?

- Increase diversity of the gut microbiome by having a diverse diet. I always suggest eating seasonally and eating the rainbow to my clients to help achieve diversity. When you do your weekly grocery shop pick something new up, look for local and seasonal produce, and fill your basket with colour!

- Microbiota love fibre – so to ensure a healthy microbiome ensure your diet meets the minimum requirement for fibre which is 30g a day. Foods that are high in fibre include beans and lentils, fruit and vegetables, wholegrains such as wild/ brown rice, oats and quinoa.

Include pre and probiotic rich foods in the diet. Prebiotic foods act as a fertiliser for your gut microbes helping them grow and thrive! Specific prebiotic foods to include in your diet are onions, leeks, green banana, asparagus and Jerusalem artichokes. Cooked and cooled starches are another amazing way to feed your gut microbiome, such as sweet potato, potato, rice and quinoa. Probiotic foods help inoculate your gut with bacteria and include things such as kimchi, sauerkraut, kefir, yoghurt, miso, tempeh and natto.

*More...*



### 3 – Supporting the Immune System and Calming Inflammation

Mental health conditions have been associated with inflammation with those suffering depression having higher levels of inflammatory markers and lower levels of anti-inflammatory markers present in their blood. There may be many reasons why this is the case, one being that our diets in the Western world are higher in omega 6 (pro-inflammatory) and lower in omega 3 (anti-inflammatory) than ever before. Omega 3 and omega 6 are referred to as essential fatty acids as they are essential for numerous functions in the body – but our bodies cannot make them, therefore we need to get them from the food we eat.

Another reason we may be prone to inflammation is poor gut health. A gut that is permeable, or leaky may allow particles (food and bacteria) to leak through from the digestive system into the blood stream where the immune system lives. The immune system doesn't recognize these particles as they shouldn't be there, so it mounts an immune response – the first immune response is inflammation!

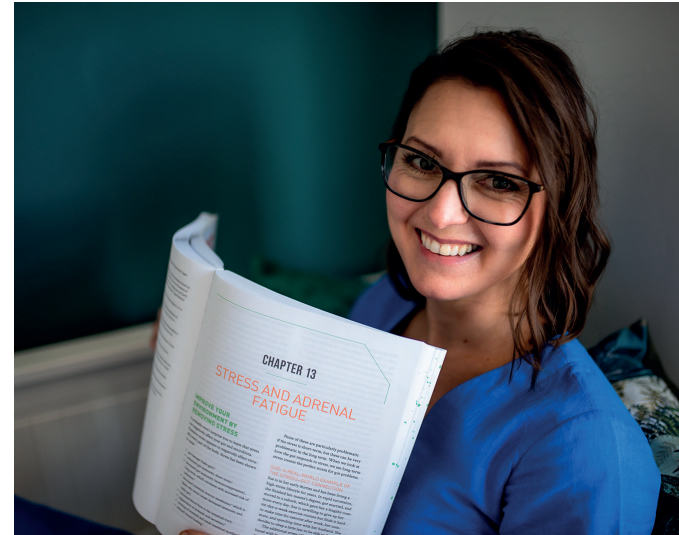
A third reason for suffering inflammation is stress. Stress is known to activate what is called the inflammasome which results in inflammation.

Whatever the reason for inflammation there are a number of ways that you can naturally calm inflammation in the body and therefore support your mental health.

1 – include omega 3 rich foods in your diet, these include oily fish (salmon, mackerel, anchovies, sardines and herring, acronym SMASH) and seafood. If you are vegan you can also get omega 3 from seaweed, flaxseeds and chia seeds but the conversion of these foods to the anti-inflammatory properties is more limited so I always suggest supplementation to my clients.

2 – follow an anti-inflammatory diet. Certain food have anti-inflammatory properties such as curcumin (turmeric), garlic and ginger. It is also important to limit foods that are known to be pro-inflammatory such as hydrogenated, vegetable, soya and canola oils, gluten, dairy, sugar and refined carbohydrates.

3 – include activities in your day that help lower your stress response, I like to include recommendations such as yoga, tai chi, meditation, breathwork and walks in nature!



## Working with Dana

### One to one consultations

My one to one consultations are available online.

These consultations allow me to understand your individual health concerns and goals and to fully address any underlying imbalances to enable real and lasting change.

The nutritional factors that are affecting your mental health can be very unique to you and my bespoke approach takes that into account.

### Talks and Workshops

Nutritional therapy can transform the health of employees and by extension, the health of organisations. Once I understand existing mental health policies and how the mental health of employees is currently being supported, I can work with organisations to educate on complimenting these policies and systems.

When individuals in your organisation understand how stress impacts food cravings, energy and concentration and how nutrition and stress management can support their mental health, they become incredible assets.

*Recipes...*



# Recipes

## Red Pepper and Bean Soup

2 servings. Ready in 35 min.

### Ingredients

1 Red onion,  
1 Red Pepper, 1 tables poon (9 g)  
1 medium sweet potato,  
1 clove garlic, 1 garlic clove (4 g)  
1 Chili,  
1 handful of coriander Leaves, 1 bunch (8 g)  
1 tin kidney beans,  
200g Passata,  
1 Lime,  
1 tsp Honey,  
1 Tbsp Olive Oil,  
1 – 2 cups water.

### Method

Peel and slice the onion, deseed and slice the peppers, dice the sweet potato. Heat the olive oil in a frying pan, then add the onion, peppers and sweet potato and sauté for about 10 minutes.

Meanwhile deseed and slice the chill and finely chop the garlic and coriander stalks. Add the garlic, chilli and coriander stalks and cook for a further 2 minutes. Drain the beans and add them to the pan along with the pasta, honey, water, add salt and pepper to taste. Bring this to a boil and then turn the heat down to simmer for 15 minutes. Once everything is cooked through blend the soup in a high speed blender until smooth.

The lime and coriander leaves can be added to the soup once cooked - to taste.

### Extra comments

This soup is amazing served with some gluten free bread and a raw goats cheese. I also like to add some pumpkin seeds for some extra crunch - as well as protein and fat!



## Stewed Apples (or as my son knows it, apple pudding)

8 servings, ready in 15 minutes.

### Ingredients

3-4 organic apples, cored and chopped into 1cm thick pieces  
Filtered water  
½ - 1 tsp ground cinnamon

### Method

In large pot add the chopped apples and cinnamon then add enough water to come half way up the apples.

Put the pot onto a high heat hob with a lid on and bring to a boil, once boiling reduce to a simmer for 10 minutes.

After 10 minutes poke a fork or knife through some of the apple pieces, it should give easily. Once the apples are soft remove the lid turn the

heat back up to high and let some of the liquid evaporate. Then turn off the hob, mash the apple until it is smooth, and let this cool to room temperature.

Once cool add to a glass airtight container and place in the fridge. This will keep in the fridge for 2 weeks.

### Extra comments

If you need more sweetness you can add raisins to this pot before cooking.

This can be served on its own, enjoyed with some coconut yoghurt or with granola sprinkled on top as a snack.

This dish is amazing for gut health at as little as one tablespoon per day.



More Recipes...



# Recipes

## Green Smoothie

1 serving. Ready in 5 min.

### Ingredients

1 large handful of spinach,  
¼ of an avocado,  
1 cup hazelnut or other plant milk,  
50ml goat or coconut kefir,  
1 scoop of Protein Powder such as Purition or RawSport,  
½ cup frozen mixed berries.

### Method

Place all ingredients in a blender and blend on a high speed until desired consistency. Avocado can be frozen overnight to make the smoothie colder, or ice can be added.



### Extra comments

If you are unable to get a protein powder add in a tablespoon of chia seeds or ground flaxseeds and a tablespoon of nut butter such as almond or cashew.

## Salmon Salad

2 servings. Ready in 25 min.

### Ingredients

80g Watercress  
50g Rocket  
½ cup sundried tomatoes  
½ an avocado  
1 large roasted sweet potato  
10 Olives  
30g Pumpkin seeds  
2 whole roasted portobello mushrooms  
80g steamed broccoli  
2 wild caught salmon fillets  
¼ cup soy sauce (gluten free!)  
1 teaspoon honey

### Method

Use left-over roasted sweet potato and mushrooms, or roast for around an hour at 180 degrees with a tablespoon of coconut oil and herbs.

Place soy sauce and honey in an oven proof dish, add the salmon and marinade for a few hours if you have time, otherwise roast in the oven in the sauce for 12 minutes or until the salmon is cooked to liking.

Assemble the salad by adding all ingredients in a bowl, top with the salmon, dress with olive oil and the sauce from the salmon and enjoy.

### Extra comments

You can add chilli, ginger and garlic to the salmon sauce for extra anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial benefits. To make this meal for the family serve with wild rice or quinoa and extra steamed vegetables.



Get in touch...





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