

Best Diet for Depression

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In a general sense, the best diet for depression is one that provides adequate nutrition and promotes general health.

Specific recommendations based upon the existing medical literature include:

Cut down or eliminate processed sugar and caffeine: Studies indicate that depressed people eat more sugar than the general population, and when sugar and caffeine were removed from the diet, people with depression experienced improvements within a week. Also, when sugar and caffeine were reintroduced to their diet their symptoms worsened.

Avoid alcohol: Alcohol consumption has been found to be more common in depressed people than in the general population, and it is associated with worse outcomes. Alcohol influences serotonin, a chemical in the brain associated with mood regulation.

Get adequate nutrition: You should eat a variety of foods in order to obtain adequate amounts of all the nutrients essential for health. Aim to eat a low glycemic, Mediterranean-style diet with adequate protein and plant foods. Avoid processed and packaged food, and eliminate MSG and artificial sweeteners like aspartame and sucralose. If you need more information google Mediterranean Diet or The Zone Diet; both give healthy guidelines.

Get enough of the B-complex vitamins, as these are essential for making the chemical messengers in the brain that regulate mood. Good sources of B vitamins include meat, liver, leafy greens, dairy products, eggs, potatoes, bananas, lentils, whole grains, tempeh, beans, green vegetables, nutritional yeast, brewer's yeast, and molasses.

Get plenty of omega-3 fatty acids: Available data suggest that either a deficiency in omega-3 fatty acids or an imbalance in the ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids is associated with increased rates of depression. Experts recommend eating two to three servings per week of smaller cold-water fish -- such as herring, mackerel, wild salmon or sardines -- in order to obtain enough omega-3 fatty acids. You should, however, avoid larger fish and farmed fish, which may contain toxins such as mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls. Alternatively, you may obtain omega-3 fatty acids by taking a fish oil supplement daily, by consuming flaxseed oil or ground flaxseed meal, or by eating a handful of walnuts each day.

Support your gut health: Increasing amounts of research draws a connection between gut inflammation and depression. If you are gassy or bloated, you likely have an inflamed gut. Think about getting an IgG food sensitivity test from a naturopath to determine likely reasons for the inflammation or start with eliminating wheat/gluten and dairy for 3 weeks and see if it elevates your mood. You can also supplement with probiotics or eat fermented foods like Kefir, Sauerkraut, Kimchee, and Kombucha. If the inflammation is due to Candida or Yeast Overgrowth, I recommend getting naturopathic support to treat it.