

3 Ways to Boost Mood with Food – Part 1

Excerpt from: <http://dieteticdirections.com/3-ways-to-boost-mood-with-food/>

1. Eat your vegetables (and fruit)

We know that **60%** of Canadians don't consume enough fruits and veggies. However, it appears that these nutrient-rich foods are vital if we want to boost our mood through food! Colourful fruits and vegetables contain disease-fighting antioxidants, along with essential vitamins and minerals.

A study published in Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics found **individuals with depression had lower antioxidant intake (vitamin C, lutein and carotenoids) as well as lower fruit and vegetable consumption compared to those without depression**. Now this might be a correlation and not causation, but still good reason to add more to our diet. Additionally, a recent publication (a combination of studies known as a meta-analysis) found **fruit and vegetable consumption is inversely associated with depression**.

How Veggies Boost Mood:

- **Folate**, found in leafy greens including spinach and kale, raises **levels of our happy hormone** (serotonin), which plays a major role in mood regulation.
- Orange, yellow and red coloured veggies contain **beta-carotene**, an antioxidant that reduces free radical damage in the brain.
- The carbohydrate in starchy vegetables like **sweet potatoes** and **regular potatoes** produce mood-boosting serotonin. If you're trying to restrict or avoid carbs, click [here](#) to read my blog, **In Defence of Carbs, Stop the Hating**.
- Lycopene in **tomatoes** is a powerful anti-oxidant that helps fight inflammation.

Did you know?

*Leafy greens like spinach and kale contain folate which **raises levels of serotonin, your happy hormone**.*

Mood-Boosting Actions for Fruit and Veggies:

- Aim for 2 servings of vegetables at lunch and dinner. One serving is equal to a handful of raw leafy greens or ½ cup cooked vegetable.
- Think half your plate veggies! This is emphasized in Canada's New Food Guide
- Aim for two to three servings of fruit a day. Have a fruit as part of your snack or as a breakfast or salad topper. A tennis ball size of fruit is one serving.
- Add a handful of spinach/kale to a stir-fry, sauce or add a side salad
- Blend vegetables into a **soup** or smoothie.