

How to Boost

Serotonin with Food Selection

Medical Expert's Explanation+ Food
Listicle



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How to boost serotonin and improve mood

Article:

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Serotonin is a chemical in the brain that can affect mood. Eating foods that contain the essential amino acid known as tryptophan can help the body to produce more serotonin.

Foods, including salmon, eggs, spinach, and seeds are among those that help boost serotonin naturally.

Serotonin is a chemical found in the brain, blood, intestines, and connective tissues of the human body. It causes blood vessels to contract, helps transmit information across the nervous system, and has a role in brain function.

Serotonin is essential for overall health and wellbeing, and people often associate it with positive mood. But the brain is complex, and further research is needed to find out more about how serotonin works.

Nevertheless, research has linked low serotonin to mood disorders, and it may have a role to play in depression.

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Reduced levels of serotonin in the brain may be a cause of memory problems and low mood. Also, low serotonin levels are more likely to affect a person negatively if they have had depression before.

In this article, we look at eight healthful foods that may help boost serotonin. We also cover the difference between serotonin and tryptophan, the importance of carbohydrates, and other tips for boosting serotonin and mood.

Serotonin vs. tryptophan



Tryptophan enables the production of serotonin.

Tryptophan is an amino acid that is important for the production of serotonin in the body. It is also key to brain function and has a role in healthy sleep.

People cannot make tryptophan in their bodies, so must obtain it from their diet.

Fortunately, tryptophan can be found in food whereas serotonin cannot.

Eating a healthful, balanced diet is an essential way to support mental as well as physical health. Including sources of tryptophan in the diet can have positive benefits on energy levels, mood, and sleep.

Eight foods that naturally boost serotonin

Tryptophan, which goes into making serotonin, is commonly found in foods that contain protein. Although meat is often a key source of protein for many people, there are also many vegetarian and vegan sources.

The following foods are good sources of tryptophan:

1. Salmon

This oily fish is also a source of omega-3 fatty acids, which are important for health. These fatty acids can help support strong bones, healthy skin, and eye function.

Salmon is also a source of vitamin D, which is essential for strong bones and teeth, and healthy muscles.

Eating two portions of oily fish per week should provide enough tryptophan for most people. Vegans and vegetarians can get omega-3 from pumpkin seeds, walnuts, and soya.

2. Poultry

Poultry includes chicken, turkey, and goose. Lean poultry, such as chicken breast, will usually be high in protein and low in fat.

3. Eggs

Some ways of cooking and preparing eggs are more healthful than others. Frying an egg adds a lot of fat, which makes it a less healthful option.

Boiling or poaching an egg does not add any additional fat. Making an omelet and eating it with a salad can be a good option for a light meal.

4. Spinach

Dark green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, are a source of tryptophan.

Spinach is also a good source of iron. Iron helps the body to make healthy red blood cells. A lack of iron in the diet can lead to anemia, low energy, or difficulty breathing.

5. Seeds



Seeds are a plant source of tryptophan.

Seeds do not contain as much tryptophan as oily fish, poultry, or eggs. However, they are a good source of tryptophan and protein for vegetarians and vegans.

Some easy ways to eat more seeds include:

- sprinkling seeds onto a salad
- mixing nuts and seeds for a snack
- choosing seeded bread
- adding seeds to cereal, porridge, or yogurt

6. Milk

Milk is also a good source of calcium, which helps to build healthy bones and teeth.

Choosing a low-fat option can be more healthful than full-fat milk, particularly for people watching their saturated fat intake.

7. Soy products

Products containing soy, such as tofu, soya milk, or soy sauce, are a source of tryptophan. These can be a good option for vegetarians and vegans.

8. Nuts

Nuts are a good source of protein, healthful fats, and fiber. Snacking on a few nuts between meals can help a person to feel fuller for longer.

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Why are carbohydrates important?

Carbohydrates are one of the body's main sources of energy. Healthful, nutrient-dense carbohydrate sources include fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain breads and pastas.

The majority of serotonin in the body is made in the gut, while the brain is where a further small amount is made. Tryptophan needs carbohydrates to be able to reach the brain and create serotonin.

Foods that contain tryptophan are most effective if eaten alongside carbohydrates.

Other tips for boosting serotonin and mood



Staying hydrated can help to maintain correct brain function.

A steady supply of energy throughout the day can help to balance mood. Whole grains are digested slowly by the body, which means they release energy gradually. Healthful snacks, such as nuts and seeds or fruit can provide energy between meals.

Drinking plenty of fluids during the day keeps the body and brain hydrated. This is critical for energy levels and correct brain functioning.

Having a healthy gut is vital for the production of serotonin. The following can help promote a healthy gut:

- including prebiotic- and probiotic-rich foods in the diet
- limiting foods that negatively alter gut bacteria, such as artificial sweeteners, trans fats, and processed and refined sugars

There is a link between serotonin and seasonal affective disorder (SAD). People can be affected by SAD during the winter months when there is less daylight. It can cause low mood, lack of energy, and disrupted sleep.

Sunshine may trigger the production of serotonin. So, getting some daylight every day, even in the winter months, could help to improve a person's mood.

Exercise has benefits for mental as well as physical health. It may reduce the risk of depression and provide an immediate mood boost as it releases endorphins, which help cope with pain or stress.

Feeling positive is often about balance. Diet, exercise, sleep, and a positive outlook are all key elements to improving mood.

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