# 5-HTP and Tryptophan foods + Brands

comprehensive, science-based guide to dietary sources related to 5-Hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP). This guide covers:

1. **Direct sources of 5-HTP** (notably rare in the human diet).
2. **Vegan foods high in tryptophan** (the amino acid precursor to 5-HTP).
3. **Animal-based foods high in tryptophan**.
4. **Reputable brands offering USDA Organic, Non-GMO Project Verified, and/or Fair Trade options** for many of these foods and supplements.

Lastly, because foods generally do **not** contain significant levels of 5-HTP (they contain tryptophan, which the body converts into 5-HTP), the ranking by “5-HTP concentration” will be heavily limited. The **only meaningful direct dietary source of 5-HTP is the seed of the African plant *Griffonia simplicifolia***. All other foods will be listed by their tryptophan content, since their contribution to 5-HTP levels is indirect.

### **Direct 5-HTP Source**

**1. Griffonia simplicifolia Seeds (Extracted Supplements)**

* **5-HTP Content**: Griffonia seeds can contain up to 15-20% 5-HTP by weight. They are the primary natural commercial source for 5-HTP supplements.
* **Form**: Generally sold as encapsulated supplements or standardized extracts.
* **Certifications & Brands**:
  + **Gaia Herbs 5-HTP**: Known for using organic and sustainably sourced botanicals when possible. Although the Griffonia seed extract itself may not be certified organic (due to limited supply chains), Gaia Herbs is a reputable brand that emphasizes quality, purity, and transparency.
  + **NOW Foods 5-HTP**: While not always USDA Organic certified, NOW Foods products are often Non-GMO and rigorously tested for contaminants.
  + **Pure Encapsulations 5-HTP**: Known for hypoallergenic, pure formulations and rigorous testing, though not always organic.
  + **Solaray 5-HTP**: Often Non-GMO and tested for quality.
* **Note**: Ensure you check the specific product listings for USDA Organic or Non-GMO Project Verification as supply chain complexities sometimes limit these certifications for Griffonia seed extracts.

**Ranking by 5-HTP:**

1. **Griffonia simplicifolia seeds and extracts** (the only significant direct dietary source of 5-HTP)

All other foods below do **not** directly contain significant 5-HTP. They are listed for their tryptophan content, which the body can convert into 5-HTP internally.

### **High-Tryptophan Vegan Foods (Indirect 5-HTP Sources)**

*Listed approximately by tryptophan density. Exact tryptophan content can vary by variety, origin, and preparation. These foods do not contain direct 5-HTP, but high tryptophan levels support the body’s natural 5-HTP synthesis.*

**2. Seeds and Seaweed**

* **Pumpkin Seeds** (~0.57 g tryptophan/100 g): Among the richest plant sources of tryptophan.
* **Spirulina** (~0.93 g tryptophan/100 g): A blue-green algae exceptionally high in protein and amino acids.
* **Sesame Seeds** (~0.29 g/100 g), **Sunflower Seeds** (~0.29 g/100 g), **Chia Seeds** (~0.3 g/100 g), **Flaxseeds** (~0.30 g/100 g) also contain notable tryptophan amounts.

**Organic & Non-GMO Brands for Seeds/Seaweed:**

* **Terrasoul Superfoods (USDA Organic, Non-GMO)**: Offers organic pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, chia seeds, and flaxseeds.
* **Navitas Organics (USDA Organic, Non-GMO)**: Sources organic superfoods like chia, flax, and hemp seeds.
* **Sunfood Superfoods (USDA Organic)**: Offers organic spirulina and other superfoods.
* **Maine Coast Sea Vegetables**: Known for organic and sustainably harvested seaweeds (though spirulina is often sourced from controlled aquatic farms).

**3. Legumes (Soy, Lentils, Beans)**

* **Soybeans** (~0.59 g/100 g): Tofu, tempeh, and edamame are rich in complete protein and high in tryptophan.
* **Chickpeas** (~0.26 g/100 g), **Lentils** (~0.22 g/100 g), **Black Beans** (~0.18 g/100 g), and **Kidney Beans** (~0.16 g/100 g) are good plant-based protein sources.

**Organic & Non-GMO Brands for Legumes:**

* **Eden Foods (USDA Organic, Non-GMO)**: Offers a wide range of beans and lentils grown organically and traditionally processed.
* **Pacific Foods (USDA Organic)**: For ready-to-use bean-based soups and broths.

**4. Nuts**

* **Almonds** (~0.21 g/100 g), **Cashews** (~0.27 g/100 g), **Pistachios** (~0.21 g/100 g), and **Walnuts** (~0.17 g/100 g) are high in healthy fats, protein, and tryptophan.

**Organic & Non-GMO Brands for Nuts:**

* **Terrasoul Superfoods (USDA Organic, Non-GMO)**: Offers various organic nuts.
* **Equal Exchange (Fair Trade, Organic)**: While best known for coffee and chocolate, also offers Fair Trade, Organic nuts when available.

**5. Whole Grains and Pseudograins**

* **Oats** (~0.18 g/100 g), **Buckwheat** (~0.18 g/100 g), **Quinoa** (~0.10 g/100 g), **Brown Rice** (~0.09 g/100 g) provide complex carbohydrates which aid tryptophan transport to the brain.

**Organic & Non-GMO Brands for Grains:**

* **Bob’s Red Mill (USDA Organic, Non-GMO options)**: Offers a wide variety of organic whole grains.
* **Arrowhead Mills (USDA Organic)**: Known for organic quinoa, oats, and rice.

**6. Fruits and Vegetables** (Lower in tryptophan compared to seeds and legumes)

* **Bananas** (~0.01 g/100 g), **Avocados** (~0.01 g/100 g), **Spinach** (~0.04 g/100 g), and **Broccoli** (~0.04 g/100 g) are nutrient-dense and support overall health, though their tryptophan contributions are modest.

**Organic & Non-GMO Produce Options:**

* Look for the **USDA Organic** seal at grocery stores or farmer’s markets. Whole Foods Market 365 and Trader Joe’s often carry USDA Organic bananas, avocados, spinach, and broccoli.
* **Full Circle Market**, **Greenwise**, and other store brands also offer organic produce.

**7. Other Vegan Sources**

* **Nutritional Yeast** (~0.53 g/100 g tryptophan): Rich in B vitamins, often fortified, and widely used in vegan diets.
* **Dark Chocolate (70%+ Cacao)** (~0.29 g/100 g tryptophan): Also contains mood-boosting polyphenols.

**Organic & Fair Trade Brands for Chocolate and Yeast:**

* **Alter Eco (USDA Organic, Fair Trade)**: High-quality, fair trade dark chocolate.
* **Equal Exchange (USDA Organic, Fair Trade)**: Known for ethically sourced chocolate.
* **Bragg Nutritional Yeast (Non-GMO)**: A well-known brand for nutritional yeast, although not always organic, is Non-GMO and well-tested.

### **High-Tryptophan Animal-Based Foods (Indirect 5-HTP Sources)**

**Important Note:** Animal products do not contain significant 5-HTP. They provide tryptophan, which your body can convert into 5-HTP internally. While Griffonia seeds are a direct source of 5-HTP, these foods are listed by their tryptophan content.

**Approximate Tryptophan Content (per 100 g, cooked portions):**

* **Shrimp** (~0.33 g)
* **Cheddar Cheese** (~0.32 g)
* **Beef Liver** (~0.31 g)
* **Salmon** (~0.28 g)
* **Tuna** (~0.28 g)
* **Chicken Breast** (~0.25 g)
* **Turkey** (~0.24 g)
* **Lean Beef** (~0.23 g)
* **Pork (Lean)** (~0.22 g)
* **Eggs** (~0.17 g)

**Organic & Sustainable Animal Product Brands:**

* **Organic Valley (USDA Organic Dairy)**: Provides organic milk, cheese, and eggs. Their dairy cows are pasture-raised, and they have Non-GMO options.
* **Vital Farms (Certified Humane, Pasture-Raised)**: Eggs and butter from pasture-raised hens and cows; while not always Non-GMO Project Verified, they adhere to high welfare standards.
* **Niman Ranch (Humanely Raised, Some Organic Options)**: Offers beef, pork, and other meats raised without antibiotics or hormones and often sourced from small family farms.
* **Applegate Organics (USDA Organic)**: Offers organic turkey and chicken products.
* **Wild Planet (Non-GMO, Sustainably Sourced)**: Offers sustainably caught tuna and salmon; while not labeled organic (organic standards don’t apply to wild-caught fish), they are highly reputable for quality and sustainability.

### **Ranking by Actual 5-HTP Content**

1. **Griffonia simplicifolia Seeds/Extracts**: Only significant direct dietary source of 5-HTP.

*(All subsequent foods do not contain notable 5-HTP. Their ranking would be by tryptophan content, which indirectly supports 5-HTP synthesis.)*

### **Summary and Scientific Notes**

* **5-HTP in Foods**: Nearly all common foods provide only tryptophan, not 5-HTP. The body must convert tryptophan into 5-HTP, and then into serotonin. For direct 5-HTP intake, Griffonia simplicifolia seed extracts are used in supplements.
* **Enhancing Tryptophan Conversion**: Consuming tryptophan-rich foods with a source of carbohydrates can facilitate the absorption of tryptophan into the brain, potentially boosting serotonin (and thereby 5-HTP) levels.
* **Certification and Sourcing**:
  + **USDA Organic**: Indicates the food was produced without synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, or GMOs (with minor exceptions).
  + **Non-GMO Project Verified**: Ensures the product has been tested to contain no genetically modified organisms above a certain threshold.
  + **Fair Trade**: Ensures that farmers and workers received fair prices and work conditions.

Selecting brands and products that hold these certifications not only supports personal health but also environmental sustainability and ethical labor practices.

### **Conclusion**

* **For Direct 5-HTP**: Choose a high-quality Griffonia simplicifolia supplement from a reputable brand like Gaia Herbs or NOW Foods.
* **For Indirect 5-HTP through Tryptophan**: Incorporate organic, Non-GMO seeds (pumpkin, spirulina, chia), legumes (Eden Foods), and whole grains (Bob’s Red Mill) into your diet. Consider pairing with carbohydrate-rich foods for optimal serotonin synthesis.
* **For Animal Sources**: Opt for organic, pasture-raised, and sustainably sourced animal products (Organic Valley dairy, Vital Farms eggs, Niman Ranch meats, Wild Planet seafood).

By selecting high-quality, certified brands and a variety of nutrient-dense foods, you can best support the body’s natural 5-HTP and serotonin production for improved mood, sleep, and overall well-being.