

# How Can Food and Drink Affect How We Feel?



## Blood sugar levels

If your blood sugar level dips, you may feel tired, irritable or experience low mood. It helps to eat regularly and to eat foods that release energy more slowly. These foods include wholegrain bread and cereal, brown pasta and rice, nuts and seeds, and bananas.

## Fruit and veg

Fruits and vegetables contain a range of nutrients which benefit our physical and mental health. Fresh fruit and veg is great, but frozen, tinned, dried, and juiced are also good. Aim to eat five portions of different fruit and veg a day, with a variety of colours if possible.

## Protein power

Protein contains chemicals called amino acids. Your brain needs these to produce neurotransmitters, which help regulate our thoughts and feelings. You can get protein from dairy products, meat and fish, soya products, nuts and seeds, and legumes (peas and beans).

## Healthy fats

Your brain needs fatty acids like omega-3 and omega-6 to help it function. You can get these healthy fats from nuts and seeds, avocados and oily fish (e.g. sardines and mackerel).

## Good for your gut

If you're stressed or anxious, it can make your gut speed up or slow down. This can lead to problems with your digestive system. Foods that support healthy digestion include fruits, vegetables, wholegrains and pulses (beans, peas and lentils). Probiotics are good for your gut, too.

## Staying hydrated

When you get dehydrated, it can make it harder to think clearly or to concentrate. This can cause us to feel indecisive, confused and anxious. If you find that you forget to drink enough fluids, you could try setting yourself a reminder on your phone or always carrying a water bottle with you.

## Caffeine

Coffee, tea, energy drinks and cola contain the stimulant called caffeine. It can give you a quick burst of energy, but it might also make you feel anxious and prevent you from getting to sleep. It can also make you feel irritable or affect your mood if you suddenly stop having it (this is called withdrawal symptoms).