

## 7 Foods That Boost Every Type of Bad Mood

Learn what to eat when you're feeling stressed, cranky, sad and more

By Sarah Jio



While that tub of ice cream in the back of the freezer may be what you crave when you're feeling blue, there is a long list of other (healthier!) foods that can cure a grouchy morning or a stressed-out afternoon. We talked to the experts to get the scoop on what to eat to make you feel better no matter what your mood.

### Stressed: Eat Chocolate



The scenario: It's Friday at 6:30 p.m. You're hungry, tired and late for your dinner date. You were supposed to be out of work an hour ago, but your boss has asked you for a favor...again. The stress is building, so what can calm you down fast? Now's the time to pull out the chocolate bar hiding in the back of your desk drawer. Experts say that chocolate—particularly dark chocolate—may help reduce the stress hormones that are swarming in your body. In fact, a recent study by researchers in Switzerland, published in the *Journal of Proteome Research*, found that eating just a smidge of dark chocolate (about 1.4 ounces) has the power to lower the stress hormones cortisol and catecholamines in the body, reducing your anxiety and giving you a better chance to get the job done—and make your date.

### Sluggish: Eat a Spinach Salad



Can't concentrate? Trouble keeping your eyes open? Skip the coffee and have a spinach salad instead, says Joanna Dolgoff, MD, author of *Red Light, Green Light, Eat Right*. "Folic acid, or folate, helps your body to process and lower homocysteine levels," says Dr. Dolgoff. "High levels of homocysteine are associated with damage to blood vessels, in addition to interfering with the flow of blood and nutrients to the brain. Impaired blood flow may leave you feeling sluggish or slow to process or recall information." The best way to get a boost? Eat folate-rich foods like spinach and other leafy green vegetables as well as potatoes, fortified breads and cereals, beans, peas and mushrooms.

### Cranky: Eat an Apple with Butter Peanut



Did you snap at your kids...and the telemarketer on the phone? Crankiness can be a sign that your body needs fuel. Just be sure to refuel the right way: with foods that don't leave you with a blood sugar crash an hour later, setting the crankiness cycle in motion all over again. To blast irritability, "eat *combination* foods at each meal and snack," says Dr. Dolgoff. "Combination foods contain a carbohydrate in combination with either some protein or some fat. Carbohydrates are a great source of energy that quickly burns out. Adding some fat or protein will slow the digestion process,

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using your sugar and energy levels to remain stable for a longer amount of time. A great example of a combination snack is an apple with peanut butter. The apple is your healthy complex carbohydrate and the peanut butter is a healthy fat. Combining these powerhouse foods tastes delicious and gives you energy that lasts for hours!”

### Anxious: Eat a Salmon Burger



Worrying about your finances, your marriage, your kids? If anxiety and worries are consuming your day, consider heading out to lunch with a friend. The conversation will do you good, and so will the meal—if you order salmon, which is one of the richest sources of omega-3 fatty acids, a nutrient that may help tame your anxiety. “Regular consumption of omega-3s has extensive research support for both the prevention and treatment of clinical depression. And there’s growing evidence that omega-3s also help reduce anger and irritability,” says Stephen Ilardi, PhD, author of *The Depression Cure*. While there are plant-based sources of omega-3s, Dr. Ilardi says it’s best to stick with fish: “The specific form of omega-3 that most strongly boosts mood is found most abundantly in coldwater fish such as salmon, herring, sardines and mackerel,” he says.

### Angry: Sip Green Tea



Maybe your neighbor’s dog barked all night long and kept you up or your coworker took credit for a project you worked on over the weekend. Whatever the reason for the *grrrrrs*, if you need to calm down fast, consider sipping a cup of green tea, says Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, a researcher, nutrition expert and author of *Beat Sugar Addiction NOW!* Here’s why: “Green tea contains theanine, which calms you and helps you maintain clear concentration and focus,” he says. Green tea’s modest amount of caffeine won’t send you into an angry rage, either; it’s gentler on your body than coffee.

### Sad: Eat Whole-Grain Cereal with Lowfat Milk



Need a happiness boost? While the source of your sadness could be work- or relationship-related, it also may have something to do with a deficiency of vitamin D in your diet. “This nutrient has many different roles in the body, one of which is to help in the production of serotonin,” says Dr. Dolgoff, explaining that serotonin is a neurotransmitter known as the “feel-good hormone” that can help you feel calm, relaxed and happy. If you’re low on vitamin D, you may be affecting your body’s ability to stabilize your mood and reduce feelings of depression. To boost your intake of vitamin D, turn to lowfat fortified milk, fortified cereals or mushrooms. “Depending on your diet, you may also need to take a calcium and vitamin D supplement,” adds Dr. Dolgoff.

### PMS: Eat an Egg-Salad Sandwich



If your go-to PMS meal usually comes in the form of comfort food (mac ‘n’ cheese, potato chips, ice cream) consider making an egg-salad sandwich instead. In the days before your period, it’s normal for women to begin craving carbohydrates, says Stella Metsovas, BS, CN, a nutritionist in private practice in Laguna Beach, California. And for good reason: Carbs help your body boost its serotonin levels, in turn helping you improve your mood. But avoid high-sugar, high-fat carbohydrates, like doughnuts or chips, which can leave you feeling sluggish—or worse, grumpy—after your blood sugar spikes, then drops. Opt for whole grains, such as whole-wheat bread, and for extra PMS-zapping strength, pair them with tryptophan-rich protein such as eggs, sunflower seeds or

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turkey, which may enhance the release of serotonin, adds Metsovas. An egg-salad sandwich on whole-grain bread offers the perfect carbohydrate-tryptophan combination. Try our favorite

tip: Cut the mayo and mix your diced hard-cooked eggs with a teaspoon of fat-free or lowfat plain Greek yogurt and half a teaspoon of whole-grain Dijon mustard.

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