

# Let's lunch and learn!

April 2025

If you participate in the State Health Plan, you can find a nutritionist near you by logging into your Aetna account.

Dietician visits are covered at 100 percent when an in-network provider is used. Visit [www.shpnc.org](http://www.shpnc.org) to learn more.

For future Worksite Wellness Lunch and Learn events or recordings of previous events, visit [oshr.nc.gov/wellness-webinars](http://oshr.nc.gov/wellness-webinars).



# The Food and Mood Connection

The Impact Nutrition and Lifestyle  
Habits Have On Our Mental  
Health

By Katie Godin, RD, LDN



**LifeStyle**  
MEDICAL CENTER

Evidence-based Lifestyle Modification  
and Medical Nutrition Therapy

# Katie Godin, RD, LDN

---

- Lifestyle Medical Centers offers Nutrition Counseling to assist with educating you on how to make positive lifestyle changes alongside continual support and encouragement.
- **Services offered:**
  - Weight Management
  - Women's Health
  - Sports Nutrition
  - Chronic Disease Counseling
  - Bariatric Support
  - Smoking Cessation
  - Sleep Assessment and Stress Management



**LifeStyle**  
MEDICAL CENTER

Evidence-based Lifestyle Modification  
and Medical Nutrition Therapy

<https://lifestylemedicalcenters.com/>

# Key Discussion Points:



1. Understand the impact that foods have on your mental health.



2. Learn what dietary patterns are best for overall mental health and mood stability.



3. Learn what lifestyle factors outside of food are also impactful on your overall emotional wellbeing.

# Did you know?

- According to the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), depression is a leading cause of ill health and disability around the world.
- A 2019 [review published in \*The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition\*](#) found that increased fruit and vegetable consumption positively impacts psychological health, and daily vegetable consumption has a therapeutic impact by reducing symptoms of depression in people with clinical depression.
- A healthy diet provides more vitamins and minerals, healthy fats, and fiber from fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and seeds, which can reduce inflammation and alter [neurotransmitters](#) to reduce symptoms of depression.
- What are Neurotransmitters? Neurotransmitters are chemical messengers that transmit signals, enabling communication within the nervous system and influencing various functions like mood, movement, and sleep.

# Link Between Nutrition and Mental Health

- What we eat can directly impact our mood, cognitive function, and emotional wellbeing. Today we will cover:
  - Important Nutrients and Food Sources
  - Importance of Protein
  - Power of a Healthy Microbiome
  - Blood Sugar's Impact
  - Dietary Patterns to Prioritize
  - Lifestyle Modifications Beyond Food





# Nutrients to Highlight

---

- Omega 3 Fatty Acids
- B Vitamins
- Vitamin D
- Iron
- Magnesium
- Protein
- Pre and Probiotics

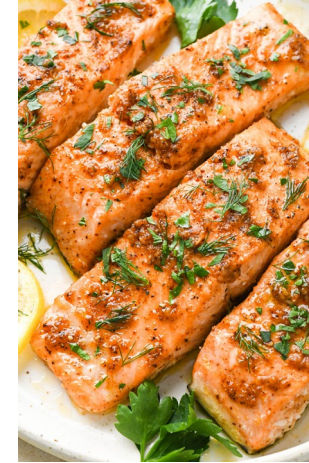


# Omega 3 Fatty Acids

---

- Important role in brain structure and function.
- Responsible for neurotransmitter function (serotonin / dopamine) which regulate mood, emotions, and behavior.
- Anti-inflammatory (chronic inflammation linked to depression / mood disorders)
- People with depression tend to have low stores of Omega 3's.

**Supplementation: Discuss with your healthcare provider. Some individuals are not a candidate for supplementation.**



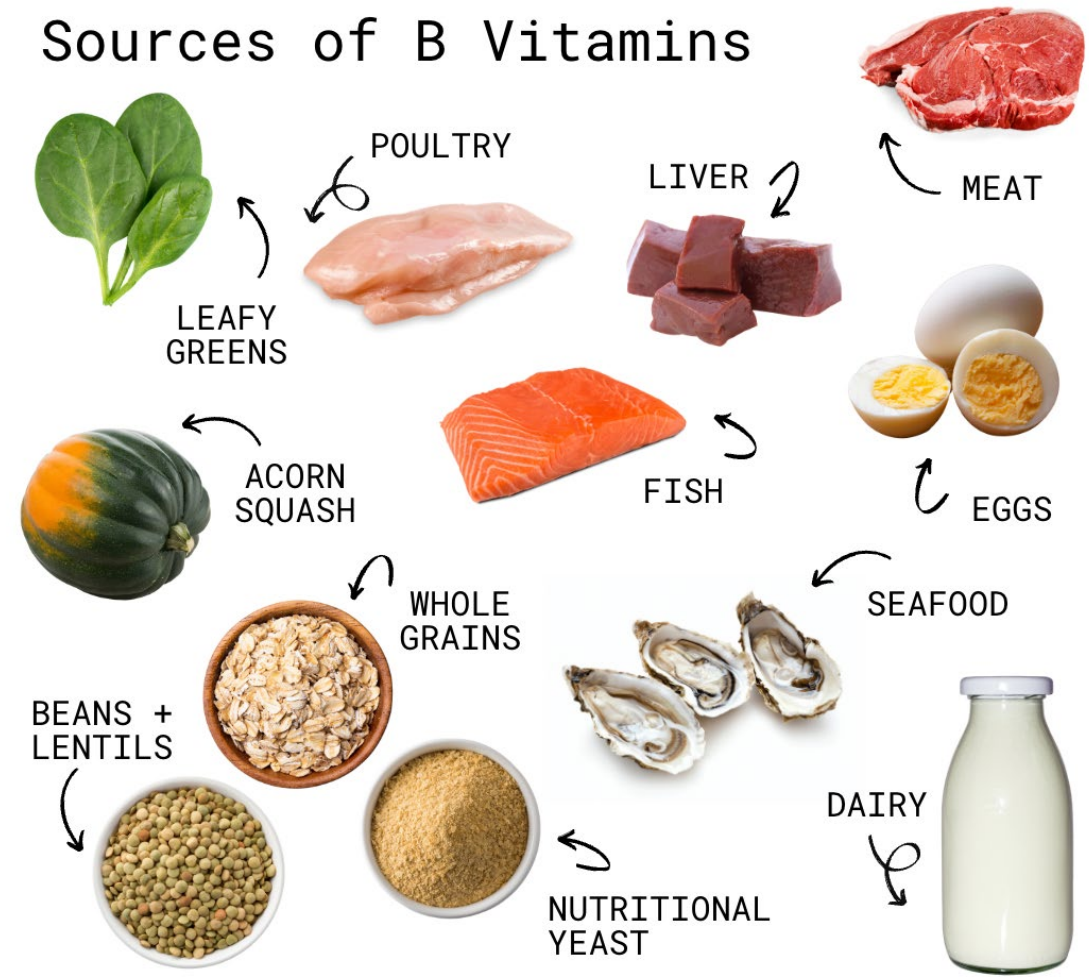


# B Vitamins

- Neurotransmitter Synthesis: (Serotonin, Dopamine, Norepinephrine)
- Energy Production: (Convert food into energy)
- Homocysteine Regulation: (Elevated levels of this amino acid are linked to depression / cognitive decline)
- Stress Response: (Help manage the body's response to stress)

**Those following a plant-based diet will need supplementation of B Vitamins (B12 specifically)**

## Sources of B Vitamins



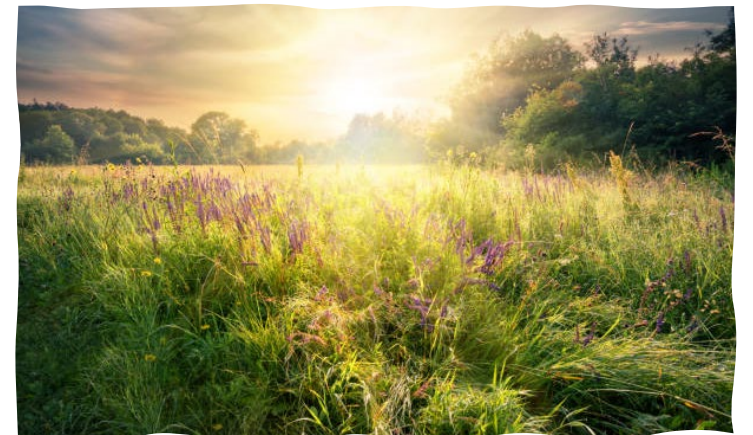
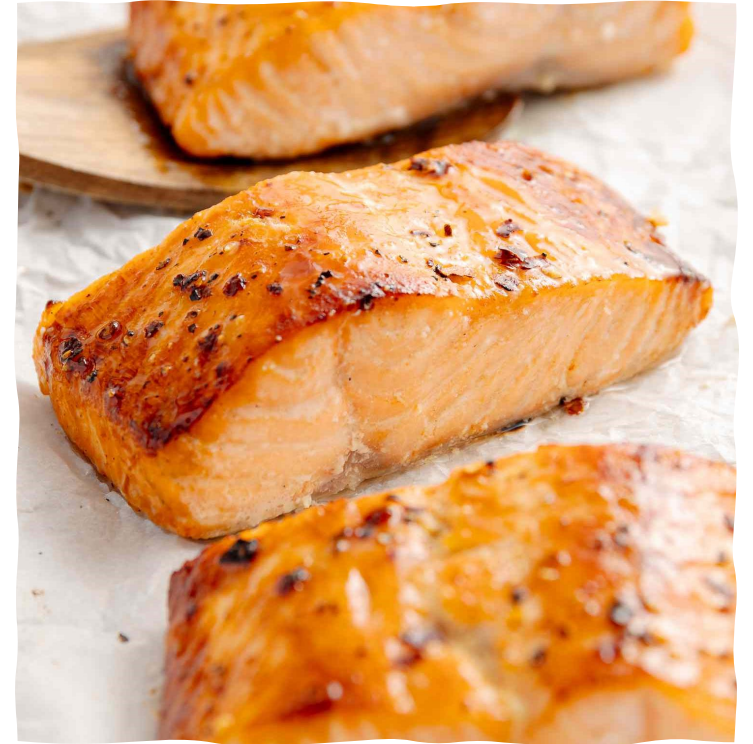
<https://madewholenutrition.com/blog/12-whole-food-sources-of-b-vitamins>

# Vitamin D

---

- Influences serotonin levels , which can impact symptoms of depression.
- Less sunlight exposure (Vitamin D exposure) has been linked with seasonal affective disorder as well as depression / anxiety.
- Vitamin D provides protection of brain cells, maintaining cognitive function and improving overall mood.

**Discuss dietary supplementation with your healthcare provider.**





# Food Sources of Iron

@snackswithjax

## Iron

- Iron deficiency can result in fatigue, weakness, and often this will affect mood causing symptoms of depression.
- Iron also plays a role in neurotransmitter production, responsible for mood regulation.
- When iron stores are low it can also affect memory, concentration, and create brain fog, which can negatively affect mood.

**Discuss dietary supplementation with your healthcare provider.**

### Heme Iron



Beef



Pork



Fish



Poultry



Shrimp



Sardines

From animal sources only.  
More efficiently absorbed by  
the body.

### Non-Heme Iron



Tofu



Lentils



White Beans



Peas



Black Beans



Eggs



Fortified Cereal



Dried Apricot



Kale



Oats



Spinach



Raisins



Flaxseed



Hemp Hearts



Whole Grains



Hummus



Broccoli



Nut Butter

Less efficiently absorbed by the  
body. But absorbed 4-6x better  
with Vitamin C rich foods!

# Magnesium

- Aids with neurotransmitter regulation.
- Helps control your body's ability to regulate stress.
- Regulates melatonin production, and supports nerve/muscle relaxation, which promotes more quality sleep at night.

**Supplementation : (Glycinate, Threonate) are most helpful for sleep. Talk to your healthcare provider to see if you would benefit from supplementation**

## FOOD SOURCES OF MAGNESIUM

WWW.REALGOODEATS.CA



PUMPKIN SEEDS  
317mg - 1/4 cup



CHINOOK (KING)  
SALMON  
140mg - 4oz



BRAZIL NUTS  
133mg - 1/4 cup



MACKEREL  
116mg - 4oz



SUNFLOWER SEEDS  
115mg - 1/4 cup



ALMONDS  
109mg - 1/4 cup



TOFU  
106mg - 4oz



CASHEWS  
96mg - 1/4 cup



BLACK EYED PEAS  
95mg - 1/2 cup\*



TEMPEH  
91mg - 4oz



PRICKLY PEAR  
88mg - 1 fruit



AMARANTH  
84mg - 1/2 cup\*



SPINACH  
83mg - 1/2 cup\*



BUCKWHEAT  
80mg - 1/2 cup\*



SWISS CHARD  
80mg - 1/2 cup\*

<https://www.realgoodeats.ca/best-food-sources-of-magnesium/>

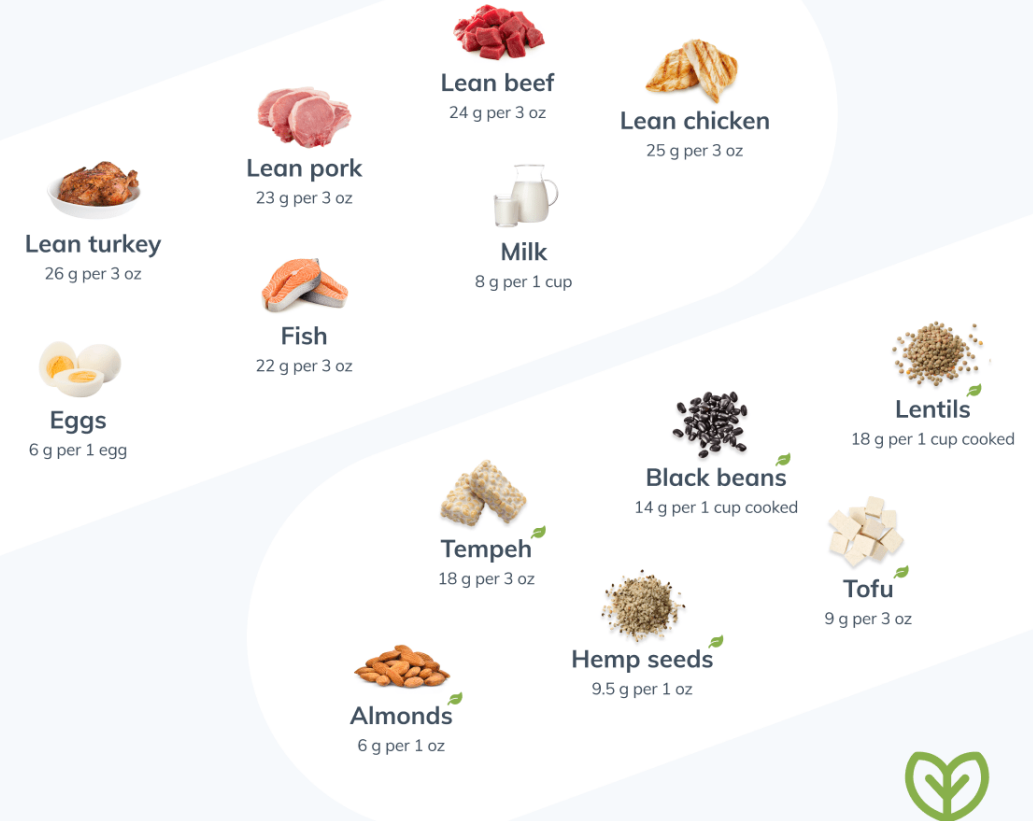


# Importance of Protein

---

- Amino Acids (from protein sources) are the building blocks for neurotransmitters responsible for regulating mood, focus, and overall mental health.
- Whether you focus on animal or plant-based protein sources, including a variety of protein into your diet can assist with overall mental health.

## Sources of protein

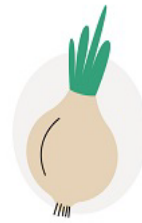


# Power of a Healthy Microbiome

- Diets rich in prebiotics, probiotics, and variety of fruits and vegetables can help with the maintenance of a healthy gut microbiome.
- A healthy microbiome can boost mood by influencing the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin (mood-regulating hormone).

**Suggest getting sources from food vs. supplements. Talk to your healthcare provider to see if supplementation is right for you.**

## PREBIOTICS



ONION



SOY BEAN



ASPARAGUS



BANANAS



LEEK



BREAD



ARTICHOKE



GARLIC

## PROBIOTICS



AGED CHEESE



BITTER CHOCOLATE



KEFIR



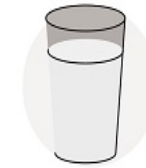
SOUR CREAM



MISO SOUP



PICKLES



PROBIOTIC MILK



YOGURT

# Blood Sugar's Impact on Mood Regulation

---

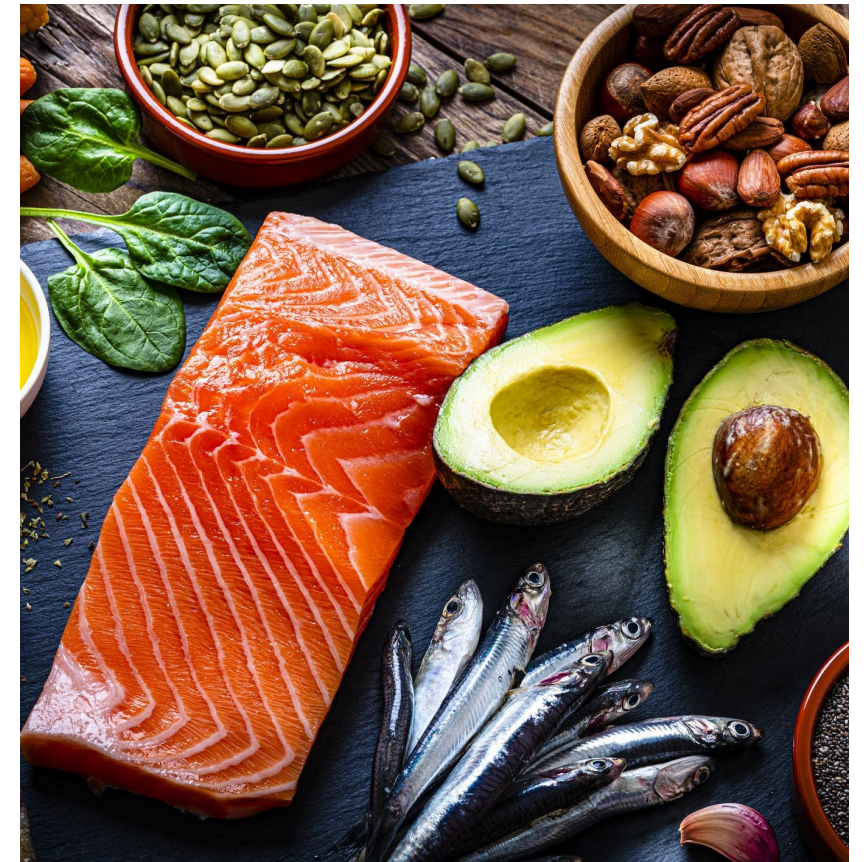
- Blood sugar swings can lead to feelings of irritability, confusion, anxiety, and fatigue, which overall negatively affect mood.
- To manage blood sugar stability, aim for :
  - Eating regular, balanced meals (Protein, Carb/Fiber, Fat)
  - Regular Physical Activity
  - Stress Management and Sleep Schedule
  - Staying Hydrated



# Dietary Patterns to Prioritize

---

- Dietary Patterns for optimal brain health:
  - Mediterranean Diet
  - DASH Diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension)
  - MIND Diet (Blend of Mediterranean and DASH)
- What these diets have in common:
  - Fruits and Veggies rich in antioxidants
  - Whole Grains
  - Nuts / Seeds / Legumes
  - Fish and Lean Protein Sources
  - Healthy Fats
  - Low in sodium
  - Limits highly processed foods
- These dietary patterns emphasize the nutrients highlighted earlier. Prioritizing these dietary patterns will aid with positive effects on overall brain health and mood stabilization.





# Beyond Food: Lifestyle Modifications

---

- Adequate Hydration
- Regular Physical Activity
- Stress Management
- Sleep Hygiene / Habits
- Routine / Annual physical examinations

Bottom Line: RD's can help educate you on a diet rich in a variety of nutrients to assist with overall mood / brain health. It is also important to be educated on lifestyle factors beyond food that can help!

<https://apuedge.com/5-habits-to-improve-your-physical-and-mental-health/>



# References

- <https://nutrition.org/how-to-boost-mental-health-through-better-nutrition/>
- <https://foodrevolution.org/blog/b-vitamins-benefits/>
- <https://www.today.com/health/diet-fitness/neurologists-eat-for-breakfast-brain-health-rcna99035>
- <https://madewholenutrition.com/blog/12-whole-food-sources-of-b-vitamins>
- <https://www.prevention.com/weight-loss/diets/a30326160/mediterranean-diet>



THANK YOU



# Let's Cook!

---

Baked Oatmeal with Blueberries and Bananas from Skinny Taste!

<https://www.skinnytaste.com/baked-oatmeal-with-blueberries-and/>

