



WEEKLY FOCUS: **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

How Nutrition Can Help Reduce Stress and Anxiety

Nutrition can play a powerful role in managing stress and anxiety. Our diet is closely linked to our mental and emotional well-being. What we eat can impact our mood, energy levels, and stress response.

One of the most important ways nutrition can help manage stress is through regulating blood sugar levels. When we eat sugary or processed foods, our blood sugar levels spike, causing a surge of energy followed by a crash. This can lead to feelings of anxiety, irritability, and fatigue. By contrast, eating complex carbohydrates like whole grains, fruits, and vegetables can help stabilize blood sugar levels, providing a steady source of energy and reducing feelings of stress and anxiety.

Omega-3 fatty acids found in fatty fish, nuts, and seeds are another essential nutrient for managing stress. Studies have shown that omega-3s can reduce inflammation and promote relaxation, helping to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression.

A balanced diet rich in whole, nutrient-dense foods can help reduce stress by supporting overall health and well-being. Eating a diet high in fruits, vegetables, lean protein, and healthy fats can help nourish the body and provide the energy needed to manage stress effectively.

Subsequently, it's important to avoid or limit foods and substances that can exacerbate stress and anxiety. Caffeine, alcohol, and processed foods can all negatively impact mood and energy levels, leading to feelings of stress and anxiety.

In conclusion, nutrition plays a crucial role in managing stress and anxiety. By eating a balanced diet rich in whole, nutrient-dense foods, avoiding or limiting substances that exacerbate stress, and incorporating specific stress-reducing nutrients like omega-3s, we can support our body's stress response system and promote overall well-being.

A balanced diet rich in nutrient-dense, whole foods, can support our body's stress response system and promote overall well-being.



Munching for Mood

The Foods That Boost or Break Your Day

Our diets have a major impact on our well-being, and that includes our ability to handle stress and anxiety. **This week, challenge yourself to swap out mood-dampening foods** with more stress-reducing options. Use the chart below to identify foods that might not be serving your body, and consider replacing them with healthy alternatives. Pay attention to your energy levels and overall mood throughout the day. By fueling your body with the right foods, you can help manage stress and feel better every day.

STRESS REDUCERS



COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES: Complex carbohydrates such as whole grains, legumes, and vegetables are a good source of fiber and nutrients that can help regulate blood sugar levels and promote feelings of calm and well-being.



FRUITS AND VEGETABLES: Fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that can help protect the body from stress-related damage.



HEALTHY FATS: Healthy fats such as those found in fatty fish, nuts, seeds, and avocado can help reduce inflammation and promote relaxation.



LEAN PROTEIN: Lean protein such as chicken, fish, and beans can help stabilize blood sugar levels and promote feelings of fullness and satisfaction.



PROBIOTICS: Probiotics found in fermented foods such as yogurt, kefir, and sauerkraut can help promote a healthy gut microbiome and reduce stress-related inflammation.

REMEMBER:

No single food can eliminate stress on its own, but incorporating a variety of these stress-reducing foods into your diet can help support your body and promote overall well-being.

STRESS INDUCERS



PROCESSED FOODS: Processed foods such as fast food, packaged snacks, and sugary drinks can increase inflammation in the body, which can contribute to stress and anxiety.



REFINED CARBOHYDRATES: Refined carbohydrates such as white bread, pasta, and pastries can cause a rapid spike in blood sugar levels, which can lead to feelings of fatigue and irritability.



CAFFEINE: While some people find caffeine to be helpful for reducing stress, others may be more sensitive to its effects. Caffeine can interfere with sleep, which can worsen stress and anxiety symptoms.



ALCOHOL: While alcohol may initially have a calming effect, it can interfere with the body's stress response system and lead to increased feelings of anxiety and depression over time.



HIGH-SODIUM FOODS: High-sodium foods such as processed meats, canned soups, and salty snacks can increase blood pressure and contribute to feelings of stress and anxiety.

REMEMBER:

It's important to approach dietary changes with a balanced, flexible mindset. Try focusing on incorporating healthy foods into your diet rather than obsessing over avoiding certain foods.

Learn more or find additional resources at nrcen.org/StressLess