

Family School Liaison Program

Horizon School Division No.67

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Mood and Food

We know that food can affect our moods and actions through personal experiences, but there is also research that supports the idea that moods and food go hand in hand. Some people's emotions are more affected by junk food than others. We have heard of children that are more sensitive to junk foods in their diets, while others seem to handle a fast food meal or their Halloween candy with no problems.

Our food intake may even be a way of controlling or soothing thoughts and feelings for some. There may even be certain people, places or situations that can trigger unhealthy eating. The nature of the food and mood connection is different from person to person. For example, one person may drink coffee all day or night and have no problem sleeping, whereas the next person may get jittery and have a hard time sleeping if they drink it too late in the day.

Commonly Found Effects of Food on our Moods

Calming Complex Carbohydrates: Complex carbohydrates such as legumes, whole grains, and fruits may make us feel more relaxed. This is because they will not create a large change in our blood sugar levels.

Carbohydrates that Charge: Sugar which is found in most baking and soft drinks, tend to cause bigger changes in mood, likely because they can spike blood sugar levels. These spikes in blood sugar can cause our body to release more stress

hormones.

Hint: *These junk sugars are less likely to cause alterations in mood if we eat them along with fiber as fiber slows down their absorption into the bloodstream.*

Happy Foods: Chocolate (in moderation), milk, chicken, bananas, and leafy greens stimulate the release of endorphins (happy hormones), or the neurotransmitter dopamine which can trigger pleasant feelings.

Sleepy Foods: Dairy, protein, whole grains, lentils, beans, sunflower or sesame seeds, hazelnuts, peanuts, hummus, and eggs all contain tryptophan, a sleep-inducing amino acid. The best snack to have at bedtime is one that has complex carbohydrates, protein, and perhaps some calcium. Try a peanut butter sandwich on whole grain bread with a glass of milk.

Sad Foods: High fat and high sugar foods are reported by some to have a detrimental effect on moods.

Each person has an individual food-mood response. By being aware of our own responses to specific foods, we can eat more of those foods that make us feel better and stay away from the ones that bring us down.

We need to be aware of our eating patterns and watch for people, places or events that may trigger emotional eating. Being aware of foods that may affect our mood negatively and other things that can trigger emotional eating, can give us the power to make positive choices!

In order to enjoy the positive affects of foods that can help manage stress and avoid possible negative food-mood side effects, here are some tips:

1. Be ware of emotional situations you may be around that could trigger eating. Awareness is very powerful.

By being aware of your triggers you can come up with a plan for when you are faced with these situations.

2. Reach out if you are feeling lonely or isolated. Call a friend, attend a social gathering or church service instead of digging out the rocky road ice cream.
3. Drink water. It will quench dehydration that we sometimes mistake for hunger. It will also fill you up.
4. Don't get too upset if you overindulge. The way you think affects how you feel and act. Just prepare better for the future.
5. Keep up with your healthy habits. Eat your veggies first, get plenty of sleep and, exercise. Exercise releases those endorphins which help improve your mood.
6. Take time to prepare a healthy lunch or snack. Being prepared may take a few extra minutes, but it's worth it!
7. Be mindful of what you eat and enjoy it in moderation. Keeping a food journal may help you determine which foods make you feel better and which ones might bring you down.
8. If you use food to cope when you are feeling especially sad, anxious, irritable, hopeless, or when you have many physical complaints, cannot sleep and are unable to continue with routine chores for an unusually long period of time, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

References:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress/MH00030>

<http://www.askdrsears.com/topics/family-nutrition/brain-foods/mood-foods>

<http://ucsfhr.ucsf.edu/index.php/assist/article/foods-and-moods-during-the-holiday-season/>