

**TSEBO**



*Yours in nutrition, Annelize Zeelie*



**Stress  
management  
and food**



# Resilience

**Definition:** The capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness.

Psychological resilience is the ability to cope with a crisis mentally or emotionally or to quickly return to pre-crisis status. Resilience exists when the person uses mental processes and behaviours in promoting personal assets and protecting oneself from the potential negative effects of stressors.

When we are well-nourished, we are so much more resilient to daily stressors. Our thoughts, emotions and behaviour can be directly linked to what we put in your mouths. Our brains require sufficient energy intake as well as adequate micro-nutrients to function optimally. A well-fed person is generally calmer and more grounded when challenging circumstances arise.

Learn to look at your annoyance as a symptom that your body is lacking something it needs. When last did you eat? Are you eating sufficient calories? Are you eating sufficient carbohydrates? Are you balancing carbohydrates with protein and fat? Are you eating enough mineral-rich foods?

**It is possible to build mental resiliency with your fork! Tips for keeping your cool with wise food choices include:**

- Eating enough and regularly enough
- Balancing your blood sugar by eating protein, fat, and carbohydrates at each meal
- Focus on increasing mineral intake – sodium, potassium, magnesium, zinc, selenium and calcium have all been shown to improve mood stability
- Incorporate gelatin or collagen in your diet as glycine has anti-stress effects
- Focus on getting enough whole food B-vitamins that are known for their mood-altering properties
- Avoid fried foods



# Stress management and food

We all experience stress; it is how we handle it that makes all the difference. Stress management can be a powerful tool for wellness, since too much stress is bad for you. There are many strategies, and one of them includes what you eat. Read on to learn how a stress management diet can help.

## Stress-busting foods: how they work

Foods can help tame stress in several ways. Comfort foods, like a bowl of warm oatmeal boost levels of serotonin; a calming brain chemical. Other foods can reduce levels of cortisol and adrenaline; stress hormones that take a toll on the body over time. A healthy diet can help counter the impact of stress by supporting the immune system and lowering blood pressure.



# Stress management and food

## Complex carbohydrates

All carbohydrates prompt the brain to make more serotonin. For a steady supply of this feel-good chemical, it is best to eat complex carbohydrates, which take longer to digest. Good choices include low-GI breads, wholewheat pastas, and hi-fiber breakfast cereals, including oats. Complex carbs can also help you feel balanced by stabilising blood sugar levels.

## Sweet potatoes

Eating whole, nutrient-rich carbohydrate sources like sweet potatoes may help lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Although cortisol levels are tightly regulated, chronic stress can lead to cortisol dysfunction, which may cause inflammation, pain, and other adverse effects. Sweet potatoes are a whole food that makes an excellent carbohydrate choice. They are packed with nutrients that are important for stress response, such as vitamin C and potassium.

## Oranges

Oranges make the list for their wealth of vitamin C. Studies suggest this vitamin C can curb levels of stress hormones while strengthening the immune system. In one study of people with high blood pressure, blood pressure and levels of cortisol (a stress hormone) returned to normal more quickly when people took vitamin C before a stressful task.



# Stress management and food

## Kimchi and other fermented foods

Kimchi is a fermented vegetable dish that is typically made with cabbage and daikon, a type of radish. Fermented foods like kimchi are packed with beneficial bacteria called probiotics and they are high in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Many studies show that probiotic supplements and probiotic-rich foods like kimchi have beneficial effects on mental health. This is likely due to their interactions with your gut bacteria, which directly affect your mood.

## Organ meats

Organ meats, which include the heart, liver, and kidneys of animals like livestock and chickens, are an excellent source of B vitamins, especially B<sub>12</sub>, B<sub>6</sub>, riboflavin, and folate, which are essential for stress control. For example, B vitamins are necessary to produce neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin that help to regulate mood. Supplementing with B vitamins or eating foods like organ meats may help reduce stress. A review of 18 studies in adults found that B vitamin supplements lowered stress levels and significantly benefited mood. Just 1 slice (85 g) of beef liver delivers over 50 percent of the Daily Value (DV) for vitamin B<sub>6</sub> and folate, over 200 percent of the DV for riboflavin, and over 2,000 percent of the DV for vitamin B<sub>12</sub>.



# Stress management and food

## Eggs

Eggs are often referred to as nature's multivitamin because of their impressive nutrient profile. Whole eggs are packed with vitamins, minerals, amino acids, and antioxidants needed for a healthy stress response. Whole eggs are particularly rich in choline, a nutrient found in large amounts in only a few foods. Choline has been shown to play an important role in brain health and may protect against stress.

## Tahini and other seeds

Tahini is a rich spread made from sesame seeds, which are an excellent source of the amino acid L-tryptophan. L-tryptophan is a precursor of the mood-regulating neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin. Following a diet high in tryptophan may help boost mood and ease symptoms of depression and anxiety.

## Spinach

Too little magnesium may trigger headaches and fatigue, compounding the effects of stress. One cup of spinach helps you stock back up on magnesium. Don't like spinach? Other green leafy vegetables are good magnesium sources, as well as dairy products, nuts and seeds, wholegrains, cocoa and dark chocolate.



# Stress management and food

## Fatty fish

Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish such as salmon and tuna, can prevent surges in stress hormones and may help protect against heart disease, depression, and premenstrual syndrome (PMS). For a healthy supply of feel-good omega-3 oils, aim to eat at least 100 g of fatty fish at least twice a week.

## Pistachios, almonds and other nuts and seeds

Pistachios, as well as other nuts and seeds, are good sources of healthy fats. Eating a handful of pistachios, walnuts, or almonds every day may help lower your cholesterol, ease inflammation in your heart's arteries, make diabetes less likely, and protect you against the effects of stress. Don't overdo it, though: Nuts are rich in calories. To get the benefits, snack on a quarter of a cup every day.



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## Avocados

One of the best ways to reduce high blood pressure is to get enough potassium, and half an avocado has more potassium than a medium-sized banana. A little bit of guacamole, made from avocado, might be a good choice when stress has you craving a high-fat treat. Avocados are high in fat and calories, though, so watch your portion size, or try an avocado chocolate mousse to get your dose of good fats and magnesium.

## Raw vegetables

Crunchy raw vegetables can help ease stress in a purely mechanical way. Munching celery or carrot sticks helps release a clenched jaw, and that can ward off tension.

## Bedtime snack

Carbohydrates at bedtime can speed the release of the brain chemical serotonin and help you sleep better. Since heavy meals before bed can trigger heartburn, stick to something light.

## Milk

Another bedtime stress buster is the time-honoured glass of warm milk. Research shows that calcium eases anxiety and mood swings linked to PMS. Combine this with cinnamon or a banana.





# Stress management and food

## Chickpeas

Chickpeas are packed with stress-fighting vitamins and minerals, including magnesium, potassium, B vitamins, zinc, selenium, manganese, and copper. These delicious legumes are also rich in L-tryptophan, which your body needs to produce mood-regulating neurotransmitters.

## Blueberries

Blueberries are associated with several health benefits, including improved mood. These berries are high in flavonoid antioxidants that have powerful anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective effects. They may help reduce stress-related inflammation and protect against stress-related cellular damage.

## Chamomile tea

Chamomile is a medicinal herb that has been used since ancient times as a natural stress reducer. Its tea and extract have been shown to promote restful sleep and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. An eight-week study in 45 people with anxiety demonstrated that taking 1.5 grams of chamomile extract reduced salivary cortisol levels and improved anxiety symptoms.



# De-stress with exercise

Besides changing your diet, one of the best stress-busting strategies is to start exercising. Aerobic exercise boosts oxygen circulation and spurs your body to make feel-good chemicals called endorphins. Aim for 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three to four times a week.





For queries please contact  
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