

BALANCED U



Reduce Stress &
FEEL GOOD

Reduce Stress & Feel Good Foods

Grains: whole wheat pasta, whole wheat bread, bulgur, buckwheat, popcorn, brown rice, quinoa or any other whole grain

Fruits: cherries, grapefruit, plums, peaches, strawberries, blueberries, apples, pears, bananas, mangoes, oranges & avocados

Vegetables: sweet potatoes, peas, corn, leafy greens, carrots, tomatoes, spinach, green beans, broccoli

Proteins: salmon, mackerel, low fat milk and yogurt, seafood, fish, lean pork, beans and legumes, turkey, soy products including tofu, nuts and nut butters

beat the stress jitters so you can chill

foods can help you find your zen

By Laura Conway, MS, RD

Holidays are coming, finals are around the corner, and your stress levels are at an all time high. Find your zen again by making smart meal choices to keep stress in check.

Foods won't solve all the issues that are stressing you out, but the wrong choices will only make a stressful situation worse. Making smart meal and snack decisions will provide your body with the fuel and nutrients it needs during a stressful time so you can focus on dealing with the issues at hand.

Foods you should eat more of:

whole grains: whole grains are digested more slowly and help increase serotonin- a feel good hormone that makes you happy.

beans & legumes: beans and legumes provide B-Vitamins which have a calming effect on your body.

fruits & vegetables: dark orange, yellow, red and green fruits and veggies provide loads of Vitamins A & C which enhance your mood.

dairy products: the calcium found in milk and other low fat dairy products can help relieve tension, reduce muscle spasms and ease anxiety and mood swings related to PMS.

go fish: fatty fish provide ample omega-3 fatty acids which are not only good for your heart and brain, but also help support a good mood. Studies link low levels of omega-3's to increased risk of depression.

what to avoid: forget the fast food, pastries, cookies, candies and other such foods. They just zap your energy and leave you feeling empty.


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powerful C

Research links Vitamin C to reduced stress levels. The next time you feel stressed out, eat an orange. Vitamin C helps reduce stress by helping return blood pressure and cortisol levels to normal. The boost to your immune system is a bonus as well. Other High C foods include green and red peppers, berries, tomatoes and assorted citrus fruits.

holiday foods

Two typical holiday foods also have a strong stress busting connection-turkey and sweet potatoes. Turkey provides the amino acid tryptophan which is notorious for helping you chill out so much you need a nap. It has a documented calming effect. Sweet potatoes are packed with beta carotene and are loaded with fiber-this means they not only support your body with important vitamins but they also curb the desire for other less healthy carbs when you are stressed. **Bonus: vegetables also contain tryptophan and it is more easily absorbed from veggie sources.**

go nuts

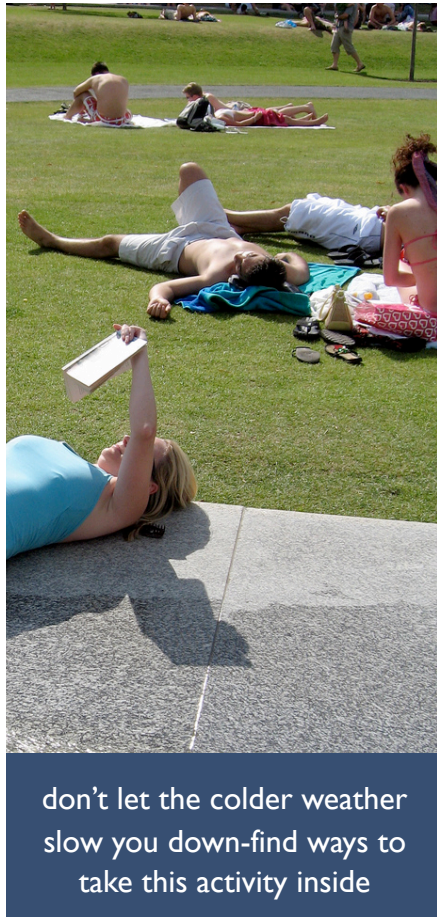
As long as they aren't packaged in candy, nuts are a great stress busting addition to your diet and are in season right now. Almonds supply Vitamins B & E, which help give your immune system a boost when you are stressed out, and walnuts and pistachios help lower blood pressure. Keep some in your car for when road rage hits, or in your purse for stressful holiday shopping!

get some folate & magnesium

Known for preventing birth defects, folate is also important to manage stress levels. Folate helps your body produce a pleasure inducing chemical called dopamine, which makes you feel good. Find folate in dark leafy greens, sunflower seeds, and supplemented cereals or breads. Spinach & Brazil nuts are great sources of magnesium which is critical to feeling good.

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don't let the colder weather slow you down-find ways to take this activity inside



Don't forget to rest & exercise!

Foods will only get you half way there. Exercise and rest help get you through stressful situations and also enhance your overall health.

Aerobic Exercise: aim to get 30 minutes of activity 5-6 days a week. Walking is great!

Yoga: has proven stress busting benefits. Practice 2-3 times a week for the most benefit.

Sleep: we rejuvenate during sleep, aim for 6-8 hours a night and try to stick to a schedule.

What Makes Stress Worse?

caffeine: excess caffeine releases adrenaline and increases overall stress.

smoking: raises your blood pressure-even small amounts are unsafe

alcohol: stimulates adrenaline which increases nervous tension, irritability, and insomnia. It also decreases immune function and reduces the body's ability to clear toxins.

high fat, sugar and salt diet: a diet high in saturated fat stresses your heart, excess sugar stresses the pancreas to clear the excess from your blood, and salt increases your blood pressure which in turn stresses your heart.

healthy, feel great spinach dip

You can mix this up in your dorm room or for a holiday party appetizer. The recipe calls for frozen spinach, but you can use an equal amount of fresh steamed.

You need:

- 1 cup of plain non fat greek yogurt
- 1 package of onion soup mix
- 1 cup of plain fat free cottage cheese
- 10oz of frozen spinach (thawed, drained and chopped)
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds

Mix all ingredients together. Refrigerate for 2-3 hours before serving. Serve with bell pepper strips (vitamin C), carrots (vitamin A), and whole grain pita chips (complex carbohydrates) for a feel good snack.