

Yes, you really can eat your way to happiness, but perhaps not in the way you might first imagine. By "happiness," I mean lasting happiness, not the fleeting kind of sensory happiness that might be experienced from eating the chocolate coating off a Magnum ice cream. And that's the distinction that really matters here: When I talk about happiness, I'm talking about sustainable happiness, not a brief moment of spurious excitement that soon reverses itself and leads to depression.

Many people try to eat their way to happiness by eating the "immediate gratification" foods like ice cream, pastries, cookies and pizza. Carbohydrates, sugar and gluten (in wheat) may uplift us momentarily because they temporarily spike blood sugar and actively alter brain chemistry. But like any drug, the downer after the effects wear off is far worse than the brief high it appeared to give us. And in the worst cases, we sometimes fall into a pattern of treating that mental rut with yet another hit of sugar or gluten to try to keep the happiness going.

This downward cycle of dependence leads us to long-term obesity, leaky gut, hormonal imbalances, auto-immune diseases, diabetes and depression (to name but a few). As author William Davis says in *Wheat Belly*: "Today's wheat has been genetically altered to provide processed-food manufacturers the greatest yield at the lowest cost; consequently, this once benign grain has been transformed into a nutritionally bankrupt yet ubiquitous ingredient that causes blood sugar to spike more rapidly than eating pure table sugar and has addictive properties that cause us to ride a roller coaster of hunger, overeating, and fatigue"

Foods for long-term happiness

Fortunately there is a plethora of other foods that promote long-term happiness. That's what this article is about: Sharing with you the good news on foods that can support healthy moods and promote a positive outlook on life for the rest of your life.

And I have to say that list starts with *omega-3 Fatty Acids*. High-quality omega-3's provide one of the most powerful and sustainable boosts to healthy moods of any commonly-available food. You can get omega-3 oils from fish, avocado, grass-fed beef, quality marine oil supplements, chia seeds, flax seeds, coconut oil and other quality nutritional supplements. Beware of grocery store foods that claim to be "made with omega-3's" because the actual quantity of omega-3 oils in those foods is usually so tiny that it hardly matters to your daily nutritional intake.

Probiotics

We rely on a harmonious balance of 'friendly' bacteria (probiotics) in our gut to maintain optimal health. A change in the body's natural balance can be caused by a number of different factors such as taking any pharmaceutical drug, emotional stress, smoking, drinking, an unhealthy diet, conditions that cause abnormal motility of the bowel including diarrhoea caused by viruses or bacteria and operations on the bowel. Antibiotics (and other specific medications and preservatives in food) cannot discern between 'good' bacteria and 'bad' bacteria as they are specifically designed to kill foreign organisms. This means that all the 'friendly' bacteria are eradicated whilst you are taking antibiotics. Furthermore these friendly bacteria also assist in the production of many important vitamins as well as serotonin. Most of the body's serotonin (a mood-enhancing neuro-transmitter) is released in the gut and researchers estimate that about 90% of all serotonin receptors are found in the gut.

It stands to reason that if your digestive system is happy then you will be happy too! Enjoy healthy nuts Pecans and walnuts are extremely beneficial to supporting not just healthy moods but healthy brain function as well. It's the oils in the nuts that do the trick. Other nuts can also be strongly supportive of healthy moods in the long term: Almonds, pistachios, macadamia nuts and macadamia nuts all have powerful health-supporting properties that positively affect brain function and therefore mood. Eat more raw nuts and you'll create better brain balance for the long term!

Adaptogens and green tea Green tea seems to provide a subtle mood lift without all the problems of typical stimulants. Just make sure you're getting the purest green tea, check your source to make sure it doesn't suffer from fluoride contamination (some green tea products grown in certain countries have been known to carry a lot of fluoride). Adaptogenic herbs are also very, very good at helping you handle stress better. This can often translate into an easier day, reduced stress and improved moods. Adaptogens include ginseng, ashwaganda, rhodiola, cordyceps mushroom and many others. Herbal tonics for mood support While we're in the realm of herbs, there are several herbal tonic products that are well known to help support healthy moods. St. John's Wort has been clinically shown to work as well as antidepressant drugs to ease symptoms of mild depression. However please consult your health care provider before taking any herbal supplements as they can clash with certain pharmaceutical drugs.

Several *Traditional Chinese Medicine* herbal formulas are also known to help support healthy moods. Chinese herbs are always used in combination, never in isolation, but one herb that's

found in many mood-supporting formulas is Bupleurum.

Eat lots of *fresh veggies* In addition to the omega-3 oils, nuts and herbs mentioned here, focus on consuming large quantities of fresh vegetables. Green leafy vegetables and cruciferous vegetables (like cauliflower and broccoli) are nature's pharmacy and you may eat as much as you want. They're loaded with mood-lifting nutrients that can also help prevent diseases and diabetes. Although fruits are healthy they have to be eaten in moderation as the sugar they contain (fructose) can also be detrimental if eaten in excess or if you suffer from digestive problems. Avoid high sugar fruits like melons, grapes, dates, ripe bananas, pineapples and mango's as they can wreak havoc with your blood sugar (especially pure fruit-juice). Rather choose berries and green apples or munch on a carrot; just make sure to buy organic produce wherever possible!

What to avoid

This section can be summed up in just two words: Sugar, Wheat

Seriously. If you want to maintain healthy moods, it's crucial to avoid refined sugar and wheat from all sources. That means no bread, no doughnuts, no cookies, no soft drinks etc. These two chemicals do more to destroy healthy moods in the long term than probably any other chemicals in the food chain. And yet, ironically, they are precisely the two chemicals that people reach for to try to get short-term mood lifts. If you suffer from mood swings or depression right now, the first and most important change you need to make in your diet is to eliminate refined sugars and wheat.

The second change to make is to start bringing in mood-enhancing health foods such as omega-3s, probiotics, fermented foods like kimchi and sauerkraut, raw nuts and lots of fresh organic produce. But the really important step is to find new ways to enjoy your feed by expanding your experience of all the amazing tastes to be found in the universe of foods provided by Mother Nature. Stay happy with healthy foods Yes, food can make you happy, but only if you focus on consuming health-enhancing foods that are natural, non-refined and packed with nutrients. Don't compromise your mental experience of life by turning to sugar, wheat and other short-term stimulants. Or if you currently consume these right now, find ways to slowly transition off them while embracing some of the healthier choices I've covered here. In the long term, you'll discover that healthy foods = healthy moods. But give it time: It may take 30 days of eating right before you really feel the full effects with improved mood. Foods are not isolated

chemicals that kick in right away. Transitioning to a healthier body and brain with healthy food takes some time. But it's time well spent. After all, you get to eat your way to a more sustainably positive outlook on life!