



Nutrition and Anxiety

There is a strong link between physical and mental health. The foundations of wellbeing include nutrition, exercise, sleep and managing stress. You can improve your stress and anxiety through the foods you eat. Here's how:

Looking after your digestive system

There is a strong connection between the health of your digestive system (your stomach and intestines) and your mental health. Your diet plays a large role in your digestive health and it is important to try and eat foods that promote a healthy digestive system.

Adding more foods into your diet that are high in **fibre (prebiotics)** and **fermented foods (probiotics)** can boost your digestive health and also your mental health.



Food for healthy digestion

Prebiotic or **high fibre** foods feed the good bacteria in our digestive system. The bacteria break down the high fibre foods which reduces inflammation and makes digestion easier. Some key sources of prebiotics include whole fruits and vegetables, wholegrains, legumes, lentils, garlic and dates.

Probiotic or **fermented** foods contain live, active micro-organisms and help introduce new bacteria to the digestive system keeping it healthy. Foods like yoghurt, pickles, kefir (fermented milk), kimchi, dosa or Yakult™ contain probiotics and can improve your digestion.



Eat more fruits and vegetables

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend that we consume a variety of foods and aim to have 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables a day. Fruit and vegetables have nutrients and minerals that can improve mental health. These nutrients can be found in foods such as:

- Citrus fruits and papaya (**Vitamin C**)
- Dark leafy green vegetables (**Folate and Zinc**)
- Avocados and all types of beans (**Magnesium**)
- Sweet potatoes, carrots, capsicum (**Vitamin A**)

Eat enough protein

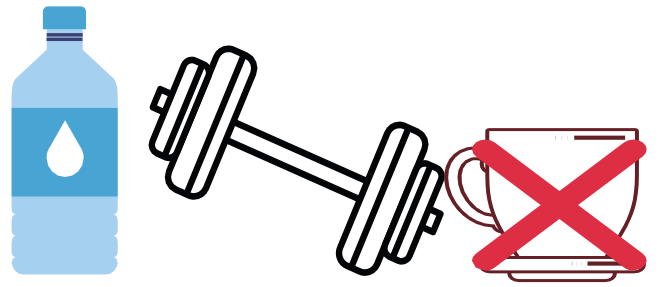
Protein is an essential macronutrient that helps sustain our muscle stores, restores our energy and helps us stay fuller for longer. Protein is made up of amino acids which have been linked to reduce anxiety and promote calmness. Protein can be found in a number of sources including eggs, dried beans, nuts, tofu, fish and various meats.



Drink more water

Staying hydrated keeps your brain functioning and helps maintain your mood and concentration levels throughout the day.

Tip: Avoid sugary drinks, reduce caffeine to **1-2** cups or swap for a herbal tea (e.g. lemon grass, orange blossom or chrysanthemum) and limit alcohol consumption where possible.



Getting more exercise

Being active and doing some form of physical activity can boost your mood through the release of a chemical compound known as endorphins (the happy hormone).

Exercising more also increases your energy levels, improves sleep and can help reduce the risk of depression.

Aim to get **10 to 30** minutes of exercise daily through social walking groups, yoga, or an exercise of your choice.

Tips to help reduce anxiety

- Buy frozen fruit and vegetables if necessary – having frozen options can still help improve stress and anxiety.
- Make the most of canned goods including beans, lentils, tomatoes and fish to help with increasing fibre, protein and omega-3 intake.
- Try tracking your intake of water and food throughout the day and planning meals for the week. This can help track your progress and also help to practice mindful eating and drinking.

Quick snack ideas:

Here are some quick snack and side dishes that can help reduce anxiety:

- Guacamole or hummus with raw vegetables or tortilla
- Greek yoghurt with fruit or cucumber
- Handful of nuts (cashews, almonds, pistachios)
- Tofu
- Papaya or other fresh fruit
- Miso soup



The importance of good fats

Good fats play an important role in making sure we stay full and regulate our hormones. **Omega-3** fats, found in oily fish, nuts and seeds, avocado, canola oil and olive oil or as a supplement, can help boost our mood.

Aim to have **2 – 3** serves of fish per week or **30g** of nuts/seeds or an Omega-3 supplement.



Need some extra support? Speak to the team at World Wellness Group to help get you in touch with a Dietitian and/ or a Mental Health Practitioner

#healthequityjustice

admin@worldwellnessgroup.org.au
www.worldwellnessgroup.org.au

33 Stoneham Street, Stones Corner QLD, 4120
P: (07) 3333 2100 F: (07) 3397 1358

ABN | 95154368804

