

**Feeling tired, depressed, or anxious?** There may be several causes for these symptoms, but think about your **FOOD** choices. FOOD is medicine for your body and food choices can impact how you feel. Low fat diets, coffee, soft drinks, sugar and grains may contribute to fatigue, insomnia, depression and anxiety. The brain is over 60% fat, so avoiding all types of fat can lead to mental health problems. Women are particularly susceptible because as we attempt to balance work, home and family responsibilities, meal planning is often difficult. Here are some helpful hints:

1. **Plan** meals and snacks ahead of time to avoid last minute fast food choices—which may be high in sugar, refined carbohydrates and “empty calories.”
2. **Drink ½ your body weight in ounces of water** daily. Water helps flush waste from the body and is important in maintaining good brain function.
3. **The best foods for improving mood** are:
  - fish, nuts, and oils which are high in **omega-3 fatty acids** such as salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel, almonds, flax seeds, avocados, etc. Many people like cod liver oil as a supplement because it also contains Vitamins A and D. In our region, Vitamin D is often deficient because of the lack of sunlight during the year.
  - turkey and chicken contain **tryptophan**, an essential amino acid which is converted into serotonin—which can be low in people suffering depression. Eating a small slice of turkey before bed will often help in improving sleep.
  - beans, peas, and lentils help **slow the release of insulin** in the body and normalize peaks and valleys in blood sugar levels. For example, a good choice is eating an apple (carbohydrate, i.e. converts to sugar easily) along with some almond butter when “carb cravings.”
  - dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, beet greens, provide **B-vitamins, folate**, and minerals which support healthy brain function.
4. Try to **avoid caffeine in coffee and soft drinks**. Although green tea also contains caffeine, there are many healthy benefits to drinking green tea.
5. **Avoid food sensitivities**. Wheat is the most common food sensitivity associated with mood disorders. Avoiding wheat for at least six weeks will often dramatically improve mood.
6. **Avoid foods with a high glycemic index** (i.e. convert to sugars quickly) such as refined sugar, white bread, watermelon, instant white rice etc.