

Mood Food – Feeding Teens for Happy Hormones

Teens & diet

Adolescence is a stage of significant physical, emotional, intellectual and social growth. To cope with these demands, teens need extra calories, protein, vitamins and minerals to operate at their best.

However, this is also a time when the desire for independence can conflict with what's in a teen's nutritional best interest. They eat more meals away from home, are influenced by the choices of their peers, often have money to purchase meals and snacks of their choice, and are dietary 'experimenters' – trying out everything from veganism to Paleo and largely influenced by the media and their peers.

Many teens also believe at this stage of their lives that they are "bulletproof" and therefore don't need to concern themselves with potential future health issues.

But...we know that good nutrition has a huge impact on physical and mental health. Energy highs and lows, stress, anxiety, hormonal mood swings, and concentration, can all be impacted by diet.



Good mood food

- **Healthy fats** – vital for energy, satiety, immune health, brain health, metabolism, cellular protection and transport of fat-soluble vitamins. Best sources avocado, olives (and cold pressed olive oil), coconut and coconut oil, seeds (pumpkin, flax, chia and hemp), nuts (almonds, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews) and organic eggs.
- **Protein** – to build and repair body tissue and muscle, muscle contraction and relaxation, control blood sugar, balance hormones, provide immune support, and cellular energy. Best complete sources include pastured, organic animal proteins such as poultry, red meats, wild fish, and eggs. Plant based (incomplete) proteins such as beans, legumes, seeds and nuts.
- **Carbohydrates** – the bodies primary source of fuel. Go for whole grain, high fiber options and skip the processed white stuff. Best sources include whole-wheat pasta and bread, brown rice, quinoa, starchy vegetables (sweet potato, squash, potato) oatmeal, beans and legumes.
- **Rainbow foods** – "natural" colored foods that come out of the ground, grow on a tree and get to you with minimal interference. Try to get at least three on the plate at each meal – full of antioxidants and phytochemicals. **Red apples, cranberries, grapes, pomegranates, raspberries, strawberries, watermelon, pink or red grapefruit, tomatoes, radishes, radicchio, red peppers, red onions, beets. Carrots, oranges, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, and peaches. Pineapple, yellow bell peppers, star fruit, and yellow beets. Broccoli, spinach, kiwi, leafy greens, peas, avocados, and green apples. Blueberries, blackberries, plums, eggplants, figs, and purple potatoes. Cauliflower, garlic and mushrooms and onion.**

So SAD

Teens, like adults, also use food to self medicate – helping calm the emotional highs and lows that come with all this physical and mental growth. However, the foods they normally turn to are the ones that make them feel worse.

The Standard American Diet (SAD diet) consists primarily of processed, refined and chemically enhanced foods, so altered from their original state that they barely qualify as a food.

Not only do they lack real nutrients, essential for healthy brain function, they also contain additives, dyes, pesticides and neurotoxins that have been implicated in both neurological and behavioral problems. They are addictive, excitatory and keep us stuck in a high/low cycle.

Over time, a SAD diet becomes a SAD way of life, impacting everything from the way we live, work, love and choose to nourish and look after ourselves.

In the words of the great Virginia Wolf **"One cannot think well, love well, and sleep well, if one has not dined well."**

References

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