

# Eat Your Way to Happiness

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**H**appiness is an important, if not the most important, of all human endeavors. It is the single most sought-after thing in the world. It's a commodity that's valuable to everyone. But are there any "secrets" to achieving happiness? What could be the winning formula to be happy?



*Happy foods? Eating the right kinds of food can make us happy.*

## Smile! Say **CHEMISTRY!**

It's true. Several studies have been made which links human happiness to chemistry. Experts revealed that a person can change how he thinks and feels by changing what he puts into his mouth. The kind of food that we eat can actually affect the chemical composition of our brain and eventually influence our mood. Certain substances or elements found in food have the ability to alter the production or release of neurotransmitters. Serotonin is an example of a neurotransmitter or chemical messenger that transmits our thoughts and actions to the brain. If a person is depressed for any reason, key brain chemicals like serotonin are deficient. The theory is that the nutrients in foods are precursors to the neurotransmitters, and they decide how much of the neurotransmitter is produced.

## The Secret

The secret to keeping those blues away is to eat your way to happiness. Putting the right fuel into your body may affect your performance and make a difference between a happy day and a grumpy day. Here are some serotonin-promoting substances found in food which may help lift a blue mood.

1. **Carbohydrates.** Carbohydrates trigger the release of insulin into the blood stream. Insulin, in turn, clears all the amino acids from the blood, except tryptophan, which is normally crowded out by other amino acids in its attempt to cross the blood-brain barrier. But when its competitors are out of the way, it floods the brain, where it's converted to serotonin. Research has shown that dieters tend to become depressed about two weeks into a diet because of the drop in serotonin level due to decreased carbohydrate intake. Stress-buster foods that are high in carbohydrates are wholegrain breads and crackers, wholegrain pasta, rice, cereal, and fruit.
2. **Caffeine.** Despite its bad reputation, caffeine may have some good effects to our well-being. Caffeine can have an antidepressant action in small amounts. Long-term epidemiological evidence supports the safety of a cup or two of coffee a day. However, too much of it (more than six average cups of tea or coffee a day) can be detrimental to health.

3. **Folic Acid.** Clinical studies have shown that folic acid deficiency has been linked to depression. This deficiency causes serotonin levels in the brain to decrease. Depression can be relieved by as little as 200 micrograms, an amount easily obtained in a cup of cooked spinach, liver, green leafy vegetables, or a glass of orange juice.
4. **Selenium.** Individuals suffering from too little selenium have been shown to be more anxious, irritable, hostile, and depressed than people with normal levels of selenium. Enough selenium to correct a deficiency will normalize mood, but more does not elevate mood further. Be sure to get your daily dose by eating tomatoes, eggs, tuna, broccoli, and sunflower seeds.
5. **Fat.** Eating too little fat can make you feel grouchy. Foods high in fat increase endorphins and make you happy. Endorphins are opiate-like chemicals that are the “feel-good” neurotransmitters. To help keep your moods on an even keel, choose healthy fats such as monounsaturated fats found in olive oil, almonds, and avocados. Additionally, the omega-3 fatty acid found in seafood (especially salmon, lobster, and shrimp), walnuts, and olive oil increases endorphin levels and may give you a natural high.
6. **Vitamin B.** Riboflavin, niacin, and B6 are found to be low on people suffering from depression. The B vitamins produce more of a natural compound called SAM-e (S-adenosylmethionine) which helps boost feel-good neurotransmitters serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine. Riboflavin is found in milk, yogurt, liver, and dark, leafy vegetables. Niacin is found in meat, tuna, peanuts, and whole grains. B6 is found in whole grains, fish, dark-green vegetables, and beans.
7. **Magnesium.** A study showed that higher rates of depression and suicide were seen in countries where magnesium is deficient in the diet. Magnesium is found in whole wheat, dried beans, and nuts.
8. **Zinc and chromium.** These elements were also found low in one quarter of those individuals with depression. Zinc is found in oysters, meat, egg yolks, whole grains, split peas, and pecans. Good sources of chromium include whole wheat, oysters, eggs, meat, and potatoes.



*Have a break. Coffee, in moderate amount, is found to make us have a good mood.*

### Winning Formula for Being Happy

Chemistry has certainly contributed to advances in medicine, thereby improving the quality of life. Advances in medicine have prolonged life and brought relief to human suffering with drug production and pharmaceutical development. Health care has improved as a result of laborious experiments in this field of science. New drugs and patient-care products have been discovered and are now being used in other fields like medicine, nursing, nutrition, and psychology.

So, if you want to walk your way to total wellness via a positive change in your moods, try the mood-elevating foods. You may end up being a happier person.

#### Sources

[www.ivillage.co.uk/food/news/fnews/articles/0,,178980\\_701110,00.html](http://www.ivillage.co.uk/food/news/fnews/articles/0,,178980_701110,00.html)  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serotonin>  
[www.nutriform.com/new/PDFs/Healthy\\_Eating\\_1.pdf](http://www.nutriform.com/new/PDFs/Healthy_Eating_1.pdf)

# Happy Foods

Put a ☺ before each item if it is a serotonin-promoting substance/food

(can make us happy) and ☹ if it is not.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. soda
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. spinach
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. eggs
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. cigarette
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. orange juice
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. beer
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. candy
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. canned goods
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. oysters
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. pizza
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. green vegetables
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. sunflower seeds
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. milk
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. lollipop
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. hamburger

# Word Search Puzzle

Can you find the hidden words?

D C L G A F D Z Z A S O S L U Z M C H A  
 T L A E S U G G A M N R C M I L L L M A  
 H A L N N G R N H O Z A D D A M I E Y L  
 G F Y S F B V U Z O F D T E S D U M D C  
 A N T R B A L B A F Y Y C H R O M I U M  
 A L S Z E A Y G E F L O A I R D N H Y N  
 Y U I E G M A I D H Y I O D D U I Z Z U  
 A N H Y G C N Y F G H H N I Y G V R L A  
 C V E M H E A Y U M M O H C I B A C H U  
 L S D B A S F U R Z N M U Y H E L R Z C  
 O T B C A R B O H Y D R A T E S F D D S  
 U L R A A I F T N Y B M N S M F O A V E  
 Z U I V F I C D N G R I A G Z S B S E A  
 T H D A T H M U Z B F E U G E B I S Z V  
 H H V N L F Z M R I L O N L N Z R D R N  
 O G Y M M C E V Z D N G E I N E G T B Y  
 E R D Y D O H Z D R E N U A A D S M B G  
 Y I T N B L F U I U I L D I B C D I O C  
 D O H C C U D S T U U A E F U Z I F U C  
 B Z R V I S Y L M H D V M H O Z O N Y M

(8 hidden words)

1. CARBOHYDRATES  
 2. RIBOFLAVIN

3. MAGNESIUM  
 4. CHROMIUM

5. CAFFEINE  
 6. SIFENIUM

7. NIACIN  
 8. ZINC

*Answer to Activities*

*Happy Foods*

1. ☹️
2. 😊
3. 😊
4. ☹️
5. 😊
6. ☹️
7. ☹️
8. ☹️
9. 😊
10. ☹️
11. 😊
12. 😊
13. 😊
14. ☹️
15. ☹️

*Word Search*

