

Eating well

Relevant to: Depression:  Anxiety:  Irritability/Anger:  General emotional control: 

'You are what you eat' is an old adage, but one which is remarkably true. Eating healthily can have wonderful effects on our physical and mental health.

A lot is written about nutrition and it can be confusing: what can be 'in' at one moment can be out the next. So what I do here is to describe the advice that experts agree upon year after year.

The first factor is variety. Most experts agree that we need variety in our diet.

The second factor is 'unprocessed'. Most experts agree that it is best to eat foods that have not been processed - fresh foods that have not been mixed with others, combined with flavourings and preservatives, etc.

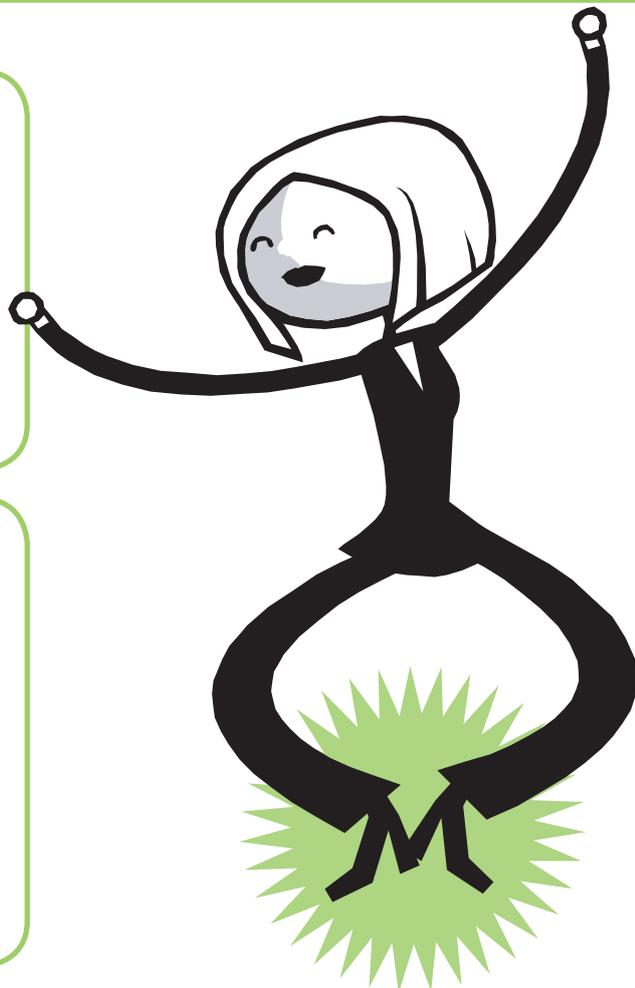
The third factor, and the one we will concentrate on, is that we need to have food from all the major food groups. Experts differ according to what are the major food groups but the following is good.

Water.

This is often omitted as a food, which is odd because it is the most essential: we don't last long without it. But we are often advised to drink way too much of it; all you need is to drink as much as you feel like, no more and no less.

Carbohydrates.

People who are watching their weight often avoid carbs, but you shouldn't, they are essential to good physical and mental health. Best sources are: oats, quinoa, sweet potatoes, beetroot, boiled potatoes, rice, and many fruits including: bananas, oranges, blueberries, and apples. Other sources include bread.



Protein.

Equally essential, but maybe we eat more than we need. Best sources include: eggs, almonds, peanuts, oats, milk, quinoa, meat, poultry and fish.

Vitamins and Minerals.

These are contained in virtually everything listed above, and also in most fruits and vegetables including: mushrooms, spinach, sweet potatoes, broccoli, aubergines, broad beans, courgette, peas, and tomatoes.

Fat and oils.

Have an unduly bad reputation because many people believe that eating fat makes you fat. This is only true insofar as that eating too much of anything makes you fat. In fact good fats and oils are easily metabolised into energy.

Good fats and oils include avocado pears, oily fish (which includes most fish), olive oil (but not for cooking), butter and coconut oil (for cooking), cheese, eggs, dark chocolate (over 70%), and nuts.

Beware of products marketed as 'low fat': they often have sugar added (which can metabolise into fat) and reasonable quantities of good fats are good for us!

Fibre / 'roughage'.

Again, these are contained in virtually everything listed above, and also in most vegetables and fruits including: blueberries, bananas, cherries, grapes, raspberries, strawberries, kiwi, and pineapples.



Food Intolerances.

Unlike allergies, food intolerances are widespread and mean that you can be sensitive to too much gluten (in wheat), lactose (in milk/dairy) or fructose (in fruit but in lots of other places – tomato sauce for example – because it's used as a sweetener in many foods). Having too much of foods you have an intolerance for may cause stomach problems, disturbed sleep and even depression via interference with sleep and the production of serotonin. So it's a good idea to go easy on these three if you think this might be relevant to you.

Project.

Experiment with eating a varied diet of mainly unprocessed foods covering all the major food groups above. Concentrate on the pure foods you feel like eating: what we feel like is often a good guide as to what will benefit us.