



Eat These Foods When You're Stressed Out!

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There is a saying that the only thing you can count on is death and taxes, but I would like to add an item to that list: stress!

It seems not many of us can get through modern life without experiencing some kind of stress, and many of us deal with stress on a daily basis. From long, tedious commutes surrounded by those with road rage, to mounting bills and higher costs of living, to media and political elites who seem to have one shared goal – to make us all crazy – stress seems to be part of the very fabric of our existence.

And it doesn't discriminate. Stress affects people of all ages, genders and nationalities, and it leads to physical and psychological health issues. Chronic stress is known to have adverse effects on the immune, cardiovascular, neuroendocrine and central nervous systems. In addition, chronic stress can take a severe emotional toll and result in anxiety disorders and depression.

The way we deal with stress can also lead to health risks. For instance, [studies](#) have found that stress causes many of us to overeat our favorite comfort foods, and this in turn leads to the growing obesity and diabetes epidemics. Additionally, research has shown that there is an association between both acute and chronic stress and a person's abuse of addictive substances.

It most likely won't surprise you to hear that, as a collective group, our stress levels seem to be increasing with each passing year. According to the yearly [Stress in America™ surveys](#), overall stress levels increased between the years 2014 and 2015, and that trend is likely to continue. As for the sources of their stress, adults list family responsibilities, work and money as their top sources.

Managing Stress in Delicious and Healthy Ways

As I mentioned a little earlier, most of us tend to reach for our favorite comfort foods to help us get through stressful times in our lives. Foods like potato chips, ice cream, cake, candy, pasta and bread may make you feel better temporarily, but these foods are high in fat and sugar and eventually, make us sick and fat!

The good news is, there are foods that are delicious and good for us, and can help us reduce the effects of stress on our bodies. These foods help us to produce mood boosters and chemicals that alleviate symptoms of stress and help to stabilize our blood sugar.

So, when you're feeling stressed out, don't reach for your favorite comfort foods that will do more harm than good, reach for the following foods instead:

Dark Leafy Green Veggies

Veggies like kale, spinach and collard greens are high in folate, and it is folate that helps us make serotonin and dopamine, neurotransmitters that fight depression and stress.

Turkey

What do most of us do after we've *stuffed* our faces at the Thanksgiving table? We find the nearest couch and take a nap! That's because turkey contains tryptophan, an amino acid that converts to serotonin (a feel good chemical) and finally melatonin (a sleepy chemical) in our bodies.

Other foods high in tryptophan include cage-free eggs and pumpkin seeds.

Fermented Foods

Fermented foods contain beneficial bacteria that our guts need to be healthy. And when your gut is healthy, your mood improves! While wine and beer are fermented, it's best to stay away from these and instead reach for foods like kimchi, kefir, and kombucha tea.

Wild Caught Salmon

Wild caught salmon is an excellent source of protein that offers other benefits. Thanks to its generous amount of omega-3 fatty acids, salmon can [cut down on anxiety levels caused by stress](#).

Blueberries

Blueberries and blackberries contain anthocyanins. These are what give the berries their deep color and help the brain make dopamine, a feel-good mood chemical.

Consider adding a handful or two of blueberries to a breakfast fruit smoothie.

Pistachios

Pistachios have got to be one of the most delicious nuts ever! Not only are they fun to eat (who doesn't like biting them open and then sucking on those salty shells?) they happen to contain a chemical that helps to dilate your arteries, which in turn means there is less stress on your heart.

Avocado

Did you know that avocados are actually a fruit? These green fruits are loaded with tons of vitamins and minerals and also healthy fats that help control our blood sugar and keep our moods stable.

Dark chocolate

And you thought I wasn't going to let you have a little fun! Yes, dark chocolate can make us feel better for numerous reasons. One of the biggest is because it contains anandamide, a neurotransmitter that blocks pain and depression. [One study](#) showed that eating just 1.5 ounces of dark chocolate a day makes us feel calmer.

But let me be clear, I am talking about dark chocolate bars only – not milk chocolate. It will do you NO GOOD to eat a Mars Bar when you're stressed. Make sure you are eating chocolate with at least 70% cacao content.

It's also very important to understand that stress is one of the biggest contributors to increased blood pressure, which, if left unchecked, can lead to strokes and heart disease.

Stress can wreak havoc on your health, as well as your overall personal life – and these stress-busting foods will go a long way to fight stress and help maintain your blood pressure.

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