



# Food for Mental Wellbeing



Peninsula  
Health

HEALTH PROMOTION





## Introduction

Australians are now spending 58 per cent of their food dollar on discretionary foods and drinks and 68 per cent of Victorian adults are overweight or obese – an estimated 3.3 million Victorians. In addition, a quarter of our children are also overweight or obese.

(Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018)

Research tells us that food choice is influenced by how we feel and studies have shown that feeling low, anxious or stressed can make us more likely to reach for high carbohydrate, sugary or salty foods. A nutrient-rich diet can be protective of your brain and mood. We know that eating well can make you feel good and help to keep you feeling mentally well.

Recommendations for the prevention of depression that are applicable to mood more broadly include:

- increasing consumption of fruits,
- vegetables,
- whole grains and nuts,
- foods high in omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (fish),
- swapping poor quality foods for more nutrient rich options,
- and limiting intake of fast foods and sweets.

(Food and Mood Centre – Deakin University n.d.)

This resource aims to assist people in obtaining accurate information about food that supports good mental health. Keeping our mind healthy is something we should do on a daily basis. It is an important part of our overall health to be able to function well, have meaningful social connections, positive self-esteem and the ability to cope with change.



*Food and Mood –  
Improving mental  
health through diet  
and nutrition.*

*– Deakin University Food and  
Mood Centre*





## Helpful Websites

### [Better Health Channel](#)

Provides health and medical information to improve the health and wellbeing of people and the communities they live in.

Choosing balanced, wholesome healthy foods may help you to feel well and happy and may help to prevent and improve symptoms of depression and anxiety.



*Eating, sleeping and exercise have a huge impact on your health. Doing these things right will make you feel better!*

*- Bite Back*

### [Black Dog Program – Bite Back](#)

The very first online positive psychology program designed to improve the overall wellbeing and resilience of young Australians aged 13 – 16 years old.

What do we mean by a healthy lifestyle?

In general– Three things:

1. Exercise
2. Eating well
3. Sleeping well.

### [Health Line](#)

Dedicated to making health and wellness information accessible, understandable, and actionable so that readers can make the best possible decisions about their health.

It's easy to wonder which foods are healthiest. A large number of foods are both healthy and tasty. By filling your plate with fruits, vegetables, quality protein, and other whole foods, you'll have meals that are colourful, versatile and good for you.





## [Mind for Better Health](#)

A UK based resource which provides advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. Campaigns to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

Eating regularly and choosing foods that release energy slowly will help to keep your sugar levels steady making it less likely that you might feel tired, irritable and depressed.

## [Hort Innovation](#)

Delivering an immediate and enduring behaviour change message to motivate more Australians to eat more fruit, vegetables and nuts, both during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. This campaign is being delivered from May to September 2020 with a possibility of extension.

Here in Australia, we're lucky to have the best fresh produce on the planet. What we eat plays a huge role in looking after ourselves, both physically and mentally.

Because simply put, when we eat better, we feel better.

*Eat a wide variety of fresh and vibrant foods to look after yourself mentally, as well as physically.*

*- Hort Innovation*



## [Deakin University's Food and Mood Centre](#)

A world-leading, multi-disciplinary research centre that aims to understand the complex ways in which what we eat influences our brain, mood, and mental health.

The Food and Mood Centre research program is focused on expanding the important research in the new field of Nutritional Psychiatry so that we can discover risk factors and develop solutions to mental health problems using dietary and nutritional strategies.





## WebMD

Content provided by a team of over 100 US doctors and health experts across a broad range of specialty areas to ensure WebMD's information is up to date, accurate and helps you live a healthier life.

No matter what challenges your day brings, it's easier to face the world when your spirits are high. And it's hard to be in a good mood when you're feeling hungry or if your body is lacking key nutrients.

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*Eating a plant-based diet is one of the healthiest things you can do for your body and the environment.*

*– Food Revolution Network*

## Food Revolution Network

A collaboration of many top food leaders committed to healthy, ethical and sustainable food for all. Aiming to empower individuals, build community, and transform food systems to support healthy people and a healthy planet.





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*When you're feeling down, it can be tempting to turn to food to lift you up. Aim for wholesome foods.*

- Health Line



## Tips and Tools

- The Better Health Channel's [Mood and food](#) is a great tool for choosing healthy foods that may help you to feel well.
- [How to eat healthily](#) is as simple as focusing on the five major food groups.
- The Black Dog "Bite Back" program has some great [Healthy lifestyles](#) tips.
- Check out [Health Line's](#) nine healthy foods that help lift your mood.
- Mind for Better Health has numerous [healthy eating](#) tips.
- The Food Revolution Network suggests some wonderful [mood boosting](#) foods to try.
- Beyond Blue – Be You program [Nutrition fact sheet](#) explains how nutrition and mental health are linked.
- VicHealth and Nutrition Australia have a new website [Cook Well Eat Well](#) which is full of wonderful cooking tips.
- [Livelihood](#) has many great ideas including some savvy saving tips.
- [Think Mental Health](#) lists ways to look after your mental health and wellbeing.





## Healthy Foods and Recipes

- Better Health Channel features a great range of exciting [recipes](#) and healthy [snacks](#).
- If you are wondering which foods are healthiest, visit [Health Line](#) list of over 50 great foods.
- Cook Well, Eat Well – VicHealth in conjunction with Nutrition Australia have put together great easy to use [recipes](#) for the whole family.
- A great list of simple and easy healthy [recipes](#) from LiveLighter.

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*Diet brings about changes in our brain structure, chemistry, and physiology, which lead to changes in behavior!*

– WebMD

## Guides & Evidence

- A trial by [Deakin University](#) showed that improving diet quality can treat major depression.
- Food Revolution Network have a number of evidence based [articles](#) on why nutrition is so important for mental wellbeing.
- The Scientific Advisory Council at the Kerry Health and Nutrition Institute explored the [science behind](#) nutrition's role in mental wellness.





## Videos, Webinars and Courses

- [Manage your mood with food](#) – Eight tips.
- [Food and Mood](#): Improving Mental Health Through Diet and Nutrition – A free short course that explores the relationship between nutrition and brain health, why it matters, and how to work towards positive food changes.
- [Mood For Food Song for Kids](#) – A learning song for kids and toddlers.

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*Did you know your mood can affect your food choices? And, on the flip side, your food choices can affect your mood.*

*– Better Health Channel*

## Apps

- [ReachOut](#) has a great list of over 50 trialled apps to support your health and wellbeing for all ages.
- Deakin University's Food and Mood Centre are currently developing the My Food and Mood App. This app will allow people to monitor patterns between their diet quality and mood. If you are interested in participating in this trial, connect to our [facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) where we will soon be advertising for participants.







## Appendix – Website Links

### Better Health Channel

- <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/>

### Black Dog – Bite Back

- <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/>
- <https://www.biteback.org.au/>

### Health Line

- <https://www.healthline.com/>
- <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/mood-food#1>

### Mind for Mental Health

- <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

### Hort Innovation

- <https://www.horticulture.com.au/>

### Deakin University's Food and Mood

- <https://foodandmoodcentre.com.au/>

### WebMD

- <https://www.webmd.com/diet/features/foods-to-uptlift-your-mood#1>

### Food Revolution Network

- <https://foodrevolution.org/>

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*Healthy gut foods include: fruits, vegetables and wholegrains, beans, pulses, live yoghurt and other probiotics.*  
– Mind for Mental Health

