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Scientists find food to improve our mood – 29th December 2025

Level 4

A study suggests ultra-processed foods and refined carbohydrates increase the risk of mental health problems. The research is in a nutrition journal. A dietitian said there was "a tremendous amount of high-quality data linking food to...worsening mental health." She advised people to cut down on sugary and low-fibre food to lower the chance of getting mood disorders. She said people should limit sugar, refined grains, and ultra-processed foods.

The study urged people to eat more high-fibre and fermented foods. It said plant-based diets could reduce depression. Such diets include "omega-3 fatty acids, colourful plants like berries, extra virgin olive oil, leafy greens, and lean sources of protein". These are known to help with depression. Related research from Australia supported the dietitian's findings. It said fermented food may lead to more positive moods and enhance learning.

Level 5

A study suggests a diet rich in ultra-processed foods and refined carbohydrates increases the risk of depression and other mental health conditions. The research is in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. A nutritional psychologist and dietitian said there is "a tremendous amount of high-quality data linking food to...worsening mental health outcomes". She advised people to cut the amount of sugary and low-fibre food they eat to lessen the chances of getting mood disorders. She said people should limit sugar, refined grains, ultra-processed foods, and alcohol.

The study urged people to increase their intake of high-fibre and fermented foods. It said a plant-based diet was effective in reducing depression. Such a diet includes "omega-3 fatty acids, colourful plants like berries, extra virgin olive oil, leafy greens, and lean sources of protein". These diets are well known to help with depression and anxiety. Related research from a university in Australia corroborated the dietitian's findings. A researcher said fermented, probiotic foods may influence brain-related biology and lead to more positive moods and enhance learning.

Level 6

A new study indicates that a diet rich in ultra-processed foods and refined carbohydrates may increase the risk of depression and other mental health conditions. The research has been published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Kristin Kirkpatrick, a nutritional psychologist and registered dietitian, said there is "a tremendous amount of high-quality data linking food to beneficial (or worsening) mental health outcomes". Ms Kirkpatrick advised people to reduce the amount of sugary and low-fibre food they eat to lessen the chances of developing mood disorders. She wrote: "Limits should be made on sugar, refined grains, ultra-processed foods, and alcohol."

Ms Kirkpatrick also advised people to increase their intake of high-fibre and fermented foods. She said the plant-based Mediterranean diet has been shown to be effective in reducing depression. She said the diet included "omega-3 fatty acids, colourful plants like berries, extra virgin olive oil, leafy greens, and lean sources of protein". She added that the diet "has been shown to assist with both depression and anxiety". Related research from Professor Felice Jacka at Deakin University in Australia corroborated Ms Kirkpatrick's findings. Dr Jacka said fermented, probiotic foods may influence brain-related biology and lead to more positive moods and enhanced learning.