

Food for Thought: Boosting Mood through Nutrition

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Today's presenters



Coletta Meyer | MS, MCHES®, CWPC

Manager, Health Engagement | GEHA



Jen Flax | CEP, CHWC, CMI, CYT-200

Health Engagement Administrator | GEHA



Lindsay Martin | MS, RDN, LDN

Health Engagement Administrator | GEHA

Agenda

- Recap
- Gut brain axis
- Mood boosting foods
- Healthy snacking
- Food for thought
- Q & A



Polling question

Which of the following activities helps boost your mood the most?

- a) Exercise
- b) Spending time with loved ones
- c) Practicing mindfulness and meditation
- d) Engaging in a creative hobby
- e) Getting 7–9 hours of sleep
- f) Enjoying a favorite meal or treat
- g) None of the above
- h) All of the above



Did you know:

- **35.2%** of all adults in the U.S. report sleeping on average for less than seven hours per night
- More than **50%** of Americans will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime
- More than 1 in 3 adults aged 45 and older in the U.S. feel lonely
- An estimated **4.7%** of adults 18 or over in the U.S. have regular feelings of depression



Recap New Year, New You

- Physical activity and exercise
- Sleep essentials
- Nutrition: Fiber, antioxidants, protein, real foods and hydration
- Social connections
- Spiritual health
- Self-care

“Feed your body well, and your soul will dance to the tune of a joyful mood.”

Author unknown



What helps boost your mood naturally?

- Good gut health
- Food for mood
- Stress management
- Moving more
- Eat the rainbow



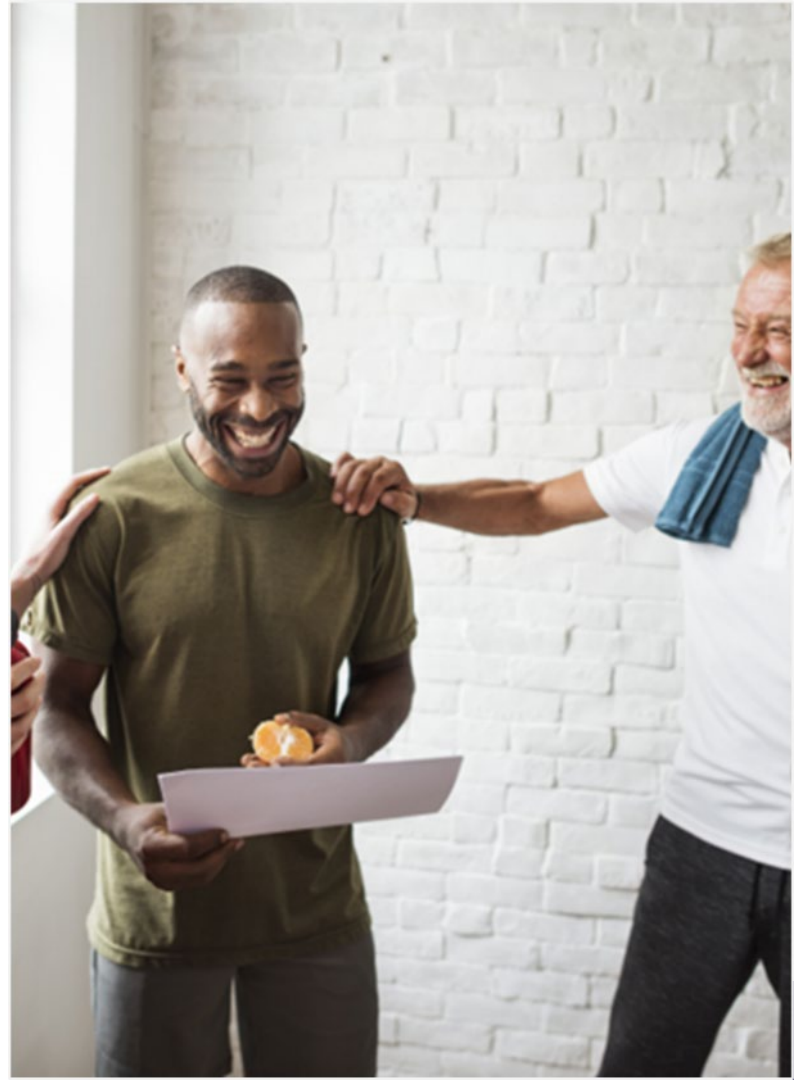
Gut and brain connection

- Exploring the link between gut health and mood
- The role of prebiotics and probiotics
- Foods that promote a healthy gut-brain connection



Importance of well-being

- Physical activity
- Mindfulness and stress reduction
- Social connections
- Creativity and hobbies
- Laughter
- Gratitude and positive thinking
- Quality sleep
- Setting achievable goals



**“Your mood doesn’t
have to match your
circumstances; it’s
a choice you make
regardless.”**

Author unknown



Emotional eating

- Stress can cause emotional eating
- Emotional eating is the consumption of more comfort foods (higher calorie, lower nutrients)
- Emotional eating is a way to cope with feelings
- Find healthy coping habits



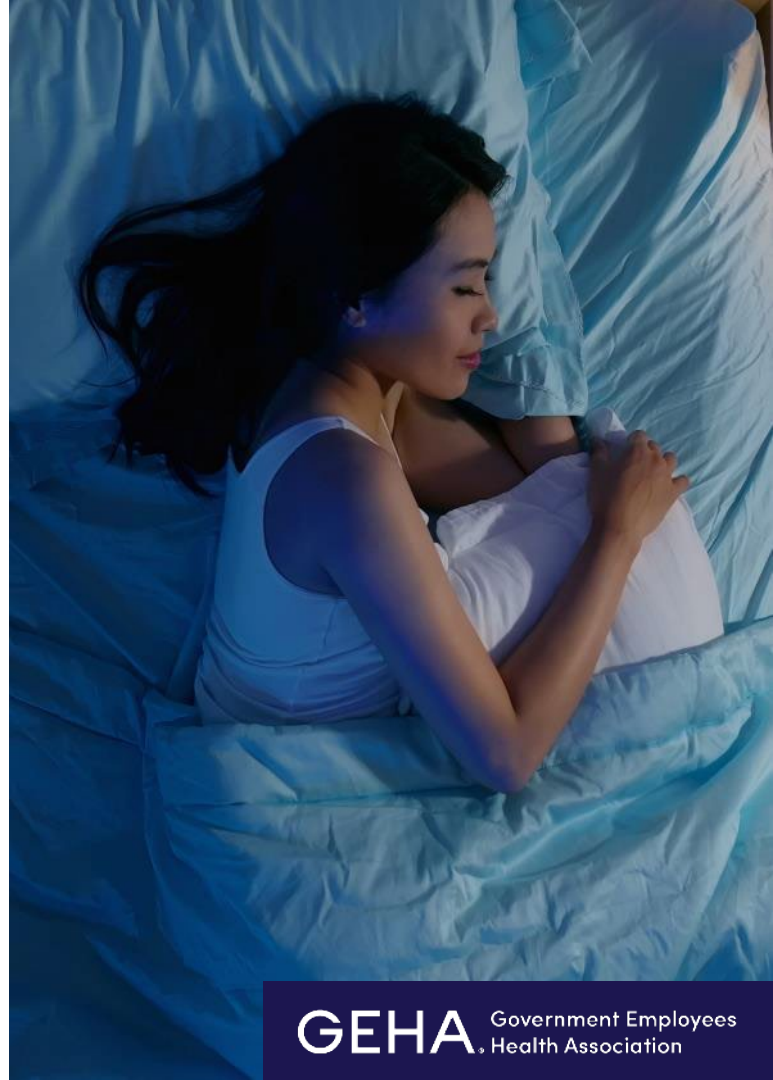
Stress affects eating habits

- Stress can suppress the body's appetite hormones
- Stress can affect the body's food preferences — higher fat, sugar or both
- When we are stressed, our bodies need more B and C vitamins, calcium, iron, zinc, omega-3FA, amino acids, probiotics and antioxidants



Sleep and mood

- Quality of sleep: Sleep hygiene is key
- Emotional regulation
- Cognitive function
- Risk of mood disorders and physical health
- Daytime sleepiness
- Positive affect and immune health
- Sleep cycles and mood



Melatonin producing foods

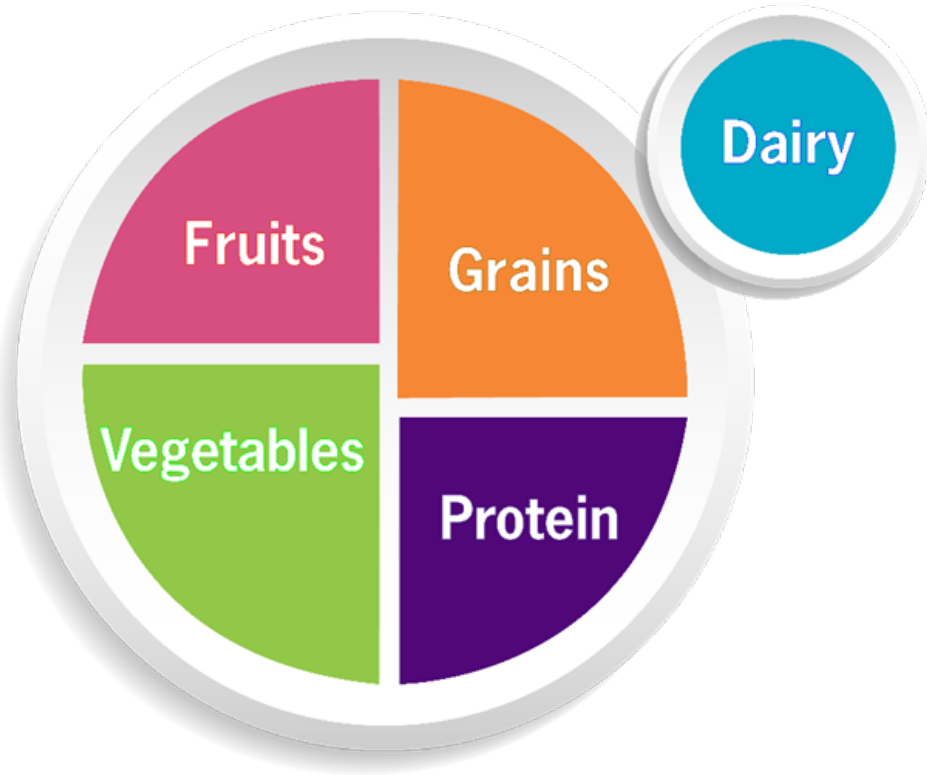
- Fruits like cherries (or cherry juice), grapes, bananas and kiwi
- Nuts and seeds
- Oats and rice
- Milk and dairy products
- Leafy greens
- Fish like salmon, tuna and mackerel
- Herbs and spices like ginger, turmeric and cardamom



Mood Boosting Foods



Balance “MyPlate”



- Use the USDA MyPlate to help create balance for all meals
- $\frac{1}{2}$ fruits and vegetables
- $\frac{1}{4}$ whole grains
- $\frac{1}{4}$ lean protein
- Low-fat dairy options

Healthy fats: Omega 3's

- Reduce risk of depression and anxiety
- Mood stabilization
- Anti-inflammatory properties
- Improve cognitive function
- Enhance response to antidepressants
- Improve sleep
- Good sources: Fatty fish, avocados, oysters, dark green leafy vegetables, brussels sprouts, nuts and seeds





Antioxidants and mood

- Vitamin C & E
- Beta-carotene
- Selenium
- Flavonoids
- Polyphenols
- Turmeric
- Resveratrol

Source: Harvard Health



Fiber for gut health

- Aim for 25–38 grams of fiber per day
- Good sources: Fruits and vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds and whole grains
- Helps to support and feed good gut bacteria to help:
 - Regulate blood sugar and stabilize mood
 - Reduce inflammation
 - Lower cholesterol
 - Regulate digestion

Source: [US Dietary Guidelines](#)

Prebiotics

+

Probiotics

- Garlic & onions
- Bananas
- Artichokes
- Legumes
- Whole grains



- Kefir
- Kombucha
- Fermented foods like kimchi
- Some foods are fortified





Amino acids and protein

- If your meal/snack has inadequate protein, you can end up feeling anxious, depressed and tired
- Consuming up to **35%** of your total daily calorie from protein can:
 - Build muscle
 - Reduce cravings
 - Promote weight loss with increased metabolism and satiety
- Good sources: Lean meats, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, beans, eggs, nuts, seeds and seafood/fish

Source: [Harvard Health](#)



Cocoa and dark chocolate

More antioxidant activity, polyphenols and flavanols than any other fruit

- The source of all chocolate is the cacao fruit
- White and milk chocolate have added sugar and fats, so they do not offer the same benefits

Source: Harvard Health

Polling question

How many times a week do you eat out?
(fast food or restaurant)

- a) 5+ times
- b) 3–4 times
- c) 2–3 times
- d) 0–2 times





Foods to avoid

- Lower-quality foods
 - High glycemic index
 - Highly processed foods
 - Sugar-sweetened beverages
 - Refined (white) grains/ breads
 - Refined sugar
 - Fried foods
 - Foods high in saturated and trans fats

Source: Cleveland clinic



Keep hydrated

- Good hydration helps you feel your best physically and mentally
- Prioritizing your water intake is an easy and effective way to stay hydrated
- Carry a water bottle everywhere you go
- Replace high-calorie beverages with water

Source: [National Institutes of Health](#)



Sunlight and vitamin D

- Sunlight and vitamin D production
- Vitamin D and mood
- S.A.D.
- Circadian rhythms and sleep
- Outdoor activity

Source: National Institutes of Health

Polling question

What type of snacks do you tend to eat?

- a) Chips, crackers or cookies
- b) Fruit or veggies
- c) Fruit with nut butter or yogurt
- d) Cheese and crackers or trail mix
- e) I don't eat snacks





Keep healthy snacks handy

- Fiber + protein = healthy, balanced snacks
- When we're hungry, we grab what is in sight
- Mindful eating habits
- Portion out
- Easy grab-and-go examples:
 - Fresh fruit with nut butter
 - Crackers and cheese
 - Hummus, veggies and pita chips
 - Trail mix



Social determinants of health for food

- Income and socioeconomic status
- Food insecurity
- Geographic locations
- Cultural and social norms
- Education and health literacy
- Social support networks
- Marketing and advertising
- Healthcare access
- Employment and working conditions
- Transportation

Source: Healthy People 2030



Importance of exercise

- Brain chemical balance and release of endorphins
- Reduction of stress hormones
- Improved sleep
- Enhanced cognitive function, self-esteem and confidence
- Social interaction
- Distraction from negative thoughts
- Long-term mood benefits
- Enhanced overall well-being

Source:
[ACSM.org](https://www.acsm.org/); American Psychological Association

GEHA member resources

- Elevate and Elevate Plus plans
 - Rally digital health platform
 - Learn more at geha.com/Elevate-Rewards
- High, Standard and HDHP plans
 - GEHA Well-being portal
 - Learn more at geha.com/HDHP
- All GEHA plans
 - Healthy recipes and health and wellness articles
 - Learn more at geha.com/Blog
- GEHA website for benefit information: geha.com

Wrap-up

- Natural ways to boost your mood
- Foods to help
- Foods that hinder
- Resources
- Q & A



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Q&A



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Health Engagement Administrator | GEHA

geha.com | wellnesswebinars@geha.com

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Q&A chat will go on through 1 p.m. Eastern time

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