



Healthypursuits



Mood and Food

By Lisa Fallon Mindel

Pumpkin pie, candy corn, stuffing, sugar, marshmallow yams, wines, cheeses, and chocolate. The holidays are a time where people “let their hair down” and indulge in food and drink that they may not usually consume during the rest of the year. Food during the holiday season is a joyful experience for some, but for others it is a struggle.

It is widely understood that how we feel can affect the foods we eat (mood to food). But what is less known is how what we eat can affect our brain function (food to mood). For many, food is a way of suppressing emotions such as loneliness, anger, boredom, or sadness. For others it is to satisfy cravings and hunger that seem to persist throughout the day, weeks or even months. With so many opportunities to indulge, it’s no wonder our weight, as well as our emotions, go up and down like a roller-coaster.

How different foods trigger our moods is dependent on what we eat and even when we eat it. Foods make our blood sugar levels rise and fall (energy and mood swings). It affects our brain chemicals (serotonin & dopamine) which influence how we feel. Caffeine can boost our energy and concentration (but too

much can lead to anxiety, depression and nervousness), while low levels of vitamins and nutrients can trigger mood swings, and a vast array of other foods and additives can also alter our moods as well as emotions.

The holiday season is now over and hopefully you’re not feeling overstuffed, tired and guilty. But if you are, here’s a way to plan your way out of this vicious cycle. First thing is to become aware. Awareness is the first step in understanding your relationship to food. WHEN you are eating is as important as WHAT you are eating (and craving).

HEALTHY NEW YEAR TIPS AWAY FROM MOOD SWINGS, WEIGHT GAIN, AND GUILT

1. Drink plenty of water. Most people are dehydrated and don’t know it. It will keep your cravings and your appetite down and make you feel better all around. Try drinking a few glasses before a meal.
2. Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables (lots of greens) a day. This will give you your nutrients and your fiber, which will keep you fuller throughout the day.
3. Start your day with some exercise. By getting your body moving, your endorphins will flow which will help you to make healthier choices.
4. Eat small, healthy meals throughout the day, starting with breakfast (ie: oatmeal, fruit, whole grains) that will keep you fueled and not famished.
5. Plan ahead! Think about what you’ll be having so you don’t get caught with low blood sugar and an all-out binge. Keep some healthy options handy such as a bowl of apples, crisp veggies, hummus and nuts around the house.
6. Eat your veggies first at your main meal. If you do this you are most likely not to overload on other less beneficial foods.
7. Don’t eat when you are bored, emotional, full, or distracted. Think about what goes into your mouth and enjoy it. Remember, it takes about 15-20 minutes for your stomach to know it has something in it, so eat slowly.



This New Year, resolve to enjoy your relationship with food and all the wonderful things it does for you and your body
Happy New Year! 🍀

Lisa Fallon Mindel is a qualified holistic health and nutrition Coach. She counsels people on how to effectively reach their health, nutrition and wellness goals.