



Inner Health
Nutrition Consulting



Happy May!

This month is all about blooming—both outside in nature and inside ourselves. As we enter **Mental Health Awareness Month**, it's a perfect time to reflect on how our habits, especially around food, influence our emotional well-being through our mind-body connection.

Below you will find many helpful tips and insights into how you can take a little more care of yourself this May. Bloom into balance this month with our guide for your mind.

Filomena & Team

A Free Guide for YOU!

Ready to take some small but **powerful steps** toward feeling more grounded and joyful this May? Here is a 4 week **printable guide to a happier you** - each week has a different nutrition and lifestyle focus. Print it out and keep it handy for a little extra **self care** nudge this month. In order to improve and support your mental health, these small acts can make all the difference.

Nourish Your Mind: Printable
Guide

Connections Between Nutrients & Mental Health

What we eat can play a powerful role in how we feel. Our brains are fueled by nutrients, and when we're nourished, we're better equipped to handle life's ups and downs. (1)

1. Omega-3s

Because of their anti-inflammatory effects related to reducing risk and severity of depression, and their role in balancing neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, they are an awesome support for improving mood and enhancing overall emotional regulation. **Some sources include fatty fish like salmon, sardines, and mackerel. Also, nuts and seeds such as flaxseeds, chia seeds, and walnuts.**

Omega-3 Feature Recipe



Hemp & Walnut Energy
Bites

2. Tryptophan

Ever curious about why Thanksgiving turkey always seems to make you sleepy? Well, it's high levels of tryptophan, an amino acid, is what to blame - because tryptophan is the sole precursor of serotonin which converts into the melatonin hormone that regulates the body's sleep-wake cycle. In fact, studies have found that lower levels of tryptophan in the body may be associated with depression and anxiety. **Some sources include poultry, eggs, cheddar cheese, almonds, peanuts, firm tofu, salmon, edamame and pumpkin seeds.**

Tryptophan Feature Recipe



Edamame and Avocado
Spread

3. Anthocyanins

These are what give our dark coloured fruits and vegetables, such as beets and berries, their deep purple, blue, and red hues. This group of pigmented antioxidants can protect our body's cells against oxidative stress and damage, boost blood flow to important emotional management areas of the brain, as well as improve gut health, which are all key contributors to mental

Anthocyanin Feature Recipe



health. Studies show that anthocyanin-rich foods may improve memory, focus, and reduce the prevalence of neurodegenerative diseases, and reducing neuroinflammation. **Some sources include blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, cherries, red cabbage, plums, red onions, purples potatoes, beets, and eggplants.**

Very Berry Tea Smoothie

4. B-Vitamins

They play pivotal roles in the synthesis of important neurotransmitters such as serotonin, dopamine, norepinephrine, and gamma-aminobutyric acid, all of which are essential for mood regulation. Out of all the B vitamins, B6 is who we should thank the most for helping us to lower our irritability, mood swings, sleep disturbances, depression and anxiety. **Some sources include poultry, salmon, tuna, bananas, potatoes, spinach, chickpeas, pistachio, lentils and ricotta cheese.**

Vitamin B6 Feature Recipe



Tuna Patties

5. Iron

Low iron levels may worsen mental health symptoms like fatigue, brain fog, anxiety, and depression, as iron is essential for oxygen transport and neurotransmitter function. Research suggests that screening for and correcting iron deficiency—especially in women—can be a simple yet powerful step toward improving mood and cognitive health. **Some sources include red meat, poultry, oysters, tuna, lentils, spinach, tofu, tempeh, quinoa, dark chocolate.**

Iron Feature Recipe



No-Bake Iron Bites

6. Magnesium

Magnesium Feature Recipe

Also known as the "calm" mineral because it helps to ease anxiety and supports restful sleep. Due to its

polyphenolic compounds, prebiotic properties, and most notably the presence of magnesium, dark chocolate helps lower cortisol, the stress hormone. **Some sources include leafy greens, pumpkin seeds, and dark chocolate.**



Raspberry Chocolate Chia Seed
Pudding

7. Vitamin D

Known as the "sunshine vitamin" for good reason - plays a key role in mood balance, sleep regulation, and cognitive function. Low levels have been linked to increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and even memory issues. Vitamin D supports mental well-being by helping regulate serotonin and melatonin, two hormones essential for emotional stability and restful sleep. **Some sources include sunlight, egg yolks, salmon, sardines, and mushrooms.**

Vitamin D Feature Recipe



Crispy Salmon
Bites

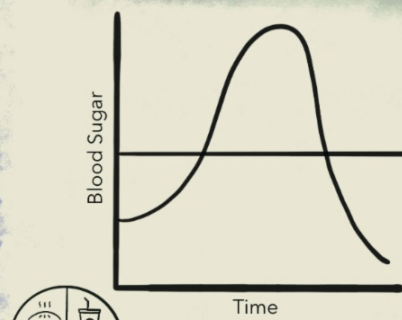
The Blood Sugar & Mood Connection

Did you know that **unstable blood sugar** levels can mimic or even intensify symptoms like anxiety, irritability, and brain fog? When your blood sugar spikes and crashes throughout the day, it can throw your **mood and mental clarity** off balance. Both high and low, can contribute to mood swings and a decrease in overall well-being. (2)

How low blood sugar affects mood: This can activate the body's "fight or flight" response, causing a surge of adrenaline and cortisol, which may result in feelings of **nervousness, anxiety, or even irritability and aggression.**

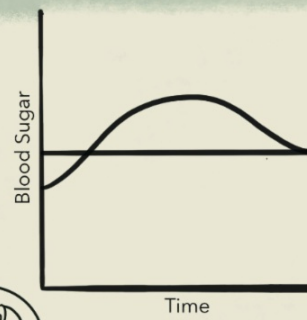
How high blood sugar affects mood: Even though high blood sugar may come after a sugary boost, it can leave you feeling **sluggish, foggy, mentally drained, and easily frustrated.** Because your body struggles to use excess glucose efficiently, we often experience an **energy crash** due to high blood sugar.

Blood sugar & mood



Spike & Crash

Eating food high in refined carbs causes a crash with irritability, brain fog, and anxiety



Balanced curve

A diet balanced in carbs, fat, and protein stabilized mood and enhanced focus.

Simple tip #1: Pair carbohydrates with a source of protein or healthy fat to slow down glucose absorption and support steadier energy and mood.

Simple tip #2: Regular physical activity (even just mindful movements throughout your day!) can improve insulin sensitivity - this helps the body utilize glucose more efficiently.

Meal Timing & Mental Health

When it comes to mental health, *what* you eat matters—but ***when you eat*** can make all the difference too! Irregular meal timing can contribute to unstable blood sugar levels, which are linked to symptoms like **anxiety, irritability, and poor concentration**.

Research shows that **skipping meals**—especially breakfast—is associated with a higher risk of mood disorders (3). On the flip side, maintaining a consistent eating pattern supports more stable blood glucose, which helps regulate mood and energy levels throughout the day.

Aim to eat **balanced meals every 3-5 hours** to give your brain the steady fuel it needs to function at its best. Remember! Regular meals = emotional regulation.

The Gut-Brain Axis

Ever get "gut feelings"? It's not just a saying—your gut and brain are constantly talking through something called the **gut-brain axis**. Your gut microbiome (aka all the

bacteria in your digestive tract) actually helps produce **key neurotransmitters** which play big roles in **regulating mood, anxiety, and sleep**. (4)

Here's how to feed those feel-good microbes:

- ❑ Fermented foods like sauerkraut, kefir, kimchi, miso, and plain yogurt are full of natural probiotics.
 - ❑ Prebiotic foods like garlic, onions, oats, and bananas give your gut bacteria the fuel they need to thrive.
 - ❑ Reduce processed foods which can throw off the balance in your gut and impact your mood.
 - ❑ Fibre-rich foods (beans, flaxseeds, apples, leafy greens) help everything move smoothly, and keep your gut microbes happy.
-

Comfort Foods That Actually Comfort

Craving comfort food? You're not alone. **Comfort foods can trigger the release of dopamine**, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward, which may explain why they make us feel good.

But here's the good news: you can enjoy your favorite comfort dishes while also supporting your physical health and mental well-being at the same time.

Here are some cozy twists on some favourite comfort foods:

❑ **Mac & Cheese:** Swap traditional pasta for chickpea or lentil pasta to boost fiber and protein. Add in sautéed spinach or steamed broccoli for extra nutrients.

❑ **Dark Chocolate:** Opt for dark chocolate (70% cocoa or higher) to reap the benefits that we talked about earlier.

❑ **Mashed Potatoes:** Combine potatoes with cauliflower and use olive oil instead of butter for a lighter, heart-healthy version.

❑ **Chili:** Use lean ground turkey or plant-based proteins like lentils and beans. Add a variety of colorful vegetables for added vitamins and minerals.

❑ **Pizza:** Make a homemade pizza using whole-grain crust, and top with plenty of veggies and a sprinkle of cheese.

Mindful Eating as Emotional Support

Feeling frazzled, anxious, or disconnected? Sometimes the most powerful support isn't *what* we eat, but *how*. Mindful eating—slowing down, tuning in, and stepping away from screens—can help **calm the nervous system, improve digestion, and reconnect you to your body's cues**.

Try this simple practice:

- Pause before you eat. Take a few deep breaths.
- Notice the colors, smells, and textures of your food.
- Chew slowly, put your fork down between bites, and avoid scrolling while eating.

☆ Just a few extra mindful minutes at each meal can shift your whole mood. ☆

Let's Not Forget Hydration!

Feeling foggy or irritable for no clear reason? It might just be **dehydration**. Even mild dehydration can affect your **mood, energy, and focus**—your brain is about 75% water, after all! Staying hydrated is a small but powerful way to support mental clarity and emotional balance throughout the day. (5)

Try these easy upgrades to stay on top of your hydration game:

- ☐ Sip on herbal infusions like peppermint, chamomile, or lemon balm for hydration with a calming bonus.
- ☐ Add fruit or veggie slices (like cucumber, lemon, or berries) to your water for flavor and antioxidants.
- ☐ Drink consistently throughout the day. Don't wait until you're thirsty to start. Keep your favourite water bottle handy.

1. <https://arthritis.ca/living-well/2024/5-foods-to-boost-your-mood#:~:text=B vitamins play a vital,mood disorders such as depression.>
2. <https://www.healthline.com/health/diabetes/diabetes-mood-swings#mood-swings>
3. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30710811/>
4. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2405844024101235>
5. <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.nutritionnews.abbott/healthy-living/diet-wellness/Hydration-and-Mental-Health--How-Are-They-Related/&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1745550722814336&usg=AOvVaw0zKyEKIW5x8Ctsv4AGVHOf>

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