

# 7070 - Food and Mood - Aggression



Researchers are now finding a connection between food choices and your mood.

What we eat and how we feel are connected, and more and more research is showing that there is a correlation between the two.

Aggression is a behaviour that many food experts say can be altered by diet. What we eat can even affect our sense of right and wrong. The food we eat is not just something to fill our stomachs with. Food is active both biologically and chemically in our body and it affects every part of us, including our moods. Your body needs nutrients (carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins etc) to make the brain chemicals that help you think clearly, maintain a good mood and act in socially acceptable ways.

## Foods that are linked to aggressive behaviour:

- **Trans Fats:** One theory is that sixty per cent of the brain is fat, so if you are consuming too many bad fats versus good fats it can impede the way brain cells communicate with each other.
- **Refined Sugar:** While carbohydrates may initially boost mood by activating serotonin, this effect doesn't last long and starts a vicious cycle of mood swings and feelings of fatigue, irritability, and/or aggression.

## The Vicious Sugar Cycle

- when you consume too many processed sugars without adequate amounts of nutrients, your blood sugar levels will increase
- body responds by releasing insulin, a hormone that rapidly reduces blood sugar levels
- when blood sugar levels are reduced too fast a hypoglycemic state (low blood sugar) will occur
- In this state you become faint, irritable or even aggressive and usually hungry for more sugary foods again to replace the sugar in the blood
- body perceives this state as a stressful situation and releases a hormone called cortisol
- cortisol triggers the release of stored glycogen from the liver to quickly raise blood sugar levels again. This causes an inflow of sugar from the liver as well as from the sweet snack you just ate starting the whole process again

## Other stimulants for mood:

- **Chocolate:** It may have antioxidants that decrease bad cholesterol, but the sugar in the chocolate is quickly digested and contributes to the sugar cycle
- **Caffeine:** While caffeine improves alertness in the short term, the crash that follows can cause irritability
- **Alcohol:** Alcohol weakens brain functions that normally restrain impulsive behaviours such as excessive aggression.
- **MSG and artificial sweeteners:** Manufactured chemicals like aspartame and monosodium glutamate (MSG) can also be temper igniters. Their ingredients can heighten reactions, including aggressive feelings. Try cutting out foods like instant soups and sauces that contain MSG, plus foods with artificial colouring and artificial sweeteners
- **Casein:** which is found in dairy, and gluten in wheat are two culprits. According to some theories, some people get a toxic effect, creating a substance in the body that leads to aggression or the inability to control behaviour

## What foods help decrease Aggression?

- Omega-3 Fats: There is evidence that omega-3 fats (found in fish oils) help improve depression and aggression
- Protein
- High Fibre Vegetables
- B Vitamins
- Peanuts, pumpkin seeds, oysters, almonds, artichokes, spinach, turkey, soy, Parmesan cheese, gelatin, chicken, clams, mozzarella, peaches, red peppers, papaya, corn, sunflower seeds, lentils, shrimp, carrots, turnips, milk, yogurt, squash, broccoli, oats, avocado, potatoes, bran, banana, kidney beans, peas, tomato juice, salmon, scallops, beef, halibut, tuna, anchovies, snapper, walnuts
  - Try adding some of these foods to your meals and as snacks to help control aggressive behaviours
  - It is best to stay away from highly processed foods that are packed with chemicals and sugars that can aggravate moods

