

PURSUIT

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Florida Blue 
BetterYou 

A monthly wellness newsletter from Better You



Can Food Affect Your Mood?

Did you know? Research shows that your mood and emotions can cause you to overeat or lose your appetite entirely. But the opposite is also true – the food you eat can make or break your mood, making you happy, focused, or angry, anxious, and even depressed. Here are some dietary guidelines to help protect your mental health from the inside out.

The Top 5 Mood Boosting Foods

- **Water** is essential to keep your body functioning properly. Some studies suggest drinking 1/2 your body weight in ounces of water each day. So, if you weigh 150 pounds, drink 75 ounces of water per day. You need to drink more water if you are doing strenu-

ous exercise or are in extreme hot weather.

- **Fruits and vegetables** are packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other nutrients. These two food groups should fill half your plate and can be fresh or frozen.
- **Lean proteins** are found in poultry, fish/seafood, lean beef or pork, unsalted nuts and seeds, legumes, beans, organic soy products, and quinoa. They help to keep your blood sugar levels steady for sustained energy and good mood. Choose organic, free-range, grass-fed, or wild-caught whenever possible. Aim for 5–6 ounces/day.
- **Whole grains/ancient grains** are filled with more fiber,

vitamins, and minerals than white, refined, processed grains. Try quinoa, amaranth, millet, wild rice, farro, spelt, and teff. Aim for 6–7 servings/day.

- **Omega-3 fats** are found in cold water fish such as salmon, sardines, halibut, and trout and in nuts and seeds (walnuts, chia seeds, hemp seeds, flaxseed). They play a role in your emotional health. One study in Brain Behavior and Immunity showed a 20% reduction in anxiety among medical students consuming omega 3's. Research has shown omega-3 fats work as well as antidepressants in preventing the signs of depression, but without any of the side effects. Aim for 3 servings/day.

Sources: www.MyPlate.gov; <https://www.health.harvard.edu/>

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Alcohol Awareness

Next month is Alcohol Awareness Month. Think about participating in the 72-hour Alcohol-free Weekend Challenge starting Friday, April 1 through Sunday, April 3. Taking part in this challenge is a chance for you to show support for people who struggle with alcohol-related problems.

Over time, extreme alcohol use can cause chronic diseases and other serious problems including high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, digestive problems, cancer,

weakened immune system, learning and memory problems, and mental health problems.

If you choose to accept the 72-hour challenge, here are some ideas for ways to connect and de-stress without alcohol:

1. Begin a daily meditation or mindfulness habit.
2. Go on a photo walk and see your neighborhood through a new lens. Bring a friend along and make it a social visit.
3. Do a mental health check in with yourself. How are you? Write it out or talk it out with a friend.
4. Call or video chat old friends and family who you haven't talked to or seen in a while.

5. Do a home repair or landscape project that's been on your list for a while.
6. Take a nap or go to bed early to give your willpower and attitude a healthy boost.

Another way to show support is wear a red ribbon. It is a symbol for the prevention of alcohol addiction and misuse. If you know someone who struggles with their relationship with alcohol, there is help available. Reach out to your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and look for in-person or virtual Al-Anon and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

Resources: <https://www.nih.gov>; <https://www.cdc.gov>; <https://www.webmd.com>; <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

Taco Stuffed Avocado (Serves 4)

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon avocado oil
- 8 ounces lean ground turkey
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup low-sodium black beans, rinsed
- ¼ cup salsa
- 2 ripe avocados, halved and pitted
- 1 tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 teaspoon lime juice
- 4 teaspoons shredded Mexican cheese blend

Directions

Heat oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add ground turkey, onion, chili powder and salt. Cook, stirring with a wooden spoon and breaking up large pieces of turkey, until cooked through, 4 to 6 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in black beans and salsa.

Carve out the flesh of each avocado half with a spoon, leaving about a 1/4-inch border all around. Transfer the scooped



flesh to a small bowl. Add cilantro and lime juice; mash with a fork until chunky-smooth.

Fill each avocado half with about 1/2 cup of the turkey filling (they will be very full). Top each with 1 teaspoon cheese and some of the guacamole.

Recipe courtesy of [Eatingwell.com](https://www.eatingwell.com); for nutritional information click [here](#).

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