

# FITNESS MANTRA



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## The invisible link between mood and food

**F**OOD – good or bad can go a long way in determining the way we feel and the thoughts we think. This fact is highly advocated by naturopathy and yogic teachings as they divide food into three categories – *Sattvic*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic*. While *Sattvic* food (fresh fruits, green leafy vegetables, nuts and grains) habits give you a sense of joy, stability and well being, *tamasic* food (alcohol, sugary foods) habits on the other hand lead to dullness and lethargy. The kind of food you eat can make all the difference.



**GUT HEALTH:** OUR gut and brain are constantly in communication with each other via a system of nerves called as Enteric Nervous system. A great gut health can mean a great mood and vice versa. A simple example could be the way you feel when you are constipated v/s when you clear your bowels.

That shift in mood from a state of irritated to happy is almost instant. It is thus necessary to focus on foods that promote good gut health – probiotics, prebiotics, omega 3 rich foods. Also avoiding caffeine, tea and alcohol are key to great gut health.

**HORMONES:** THE four major hormones which determine human happiness, are – Endorphins, Dopamine, Serotonin, and Oxytocin. The release of the right kind of hormones at the right time and right quantity can also determine mood. While its secretion depends on multiple lifestyle factors, the right kind of nutritional choices help in the manufacture of these hormones like endorphin and oxytocin.

Testosterone also plays a

huge role in regulating moods of both genders. While it's a dominant hormone in male, females have it too in minute amounts. A deficiency of testosterone can affect emotional vitality, leading to more depression, anger, irritability, feelings of insecurity and anxiety. Foods that are rich in zinc – like nuts and seeds especially pumpkin seeds, omega 3 fatty acids (walnuts and flaxseeds), oysters, fatty fish, sunshine vitamins i.e. vitamin D, whole eggs boost the production of this male hormone.

**NEUROTRANSMITTERS:** THESE are chemical substances that our neurons produce. Serotonin, Dopamine, GABA, Acetylcholine are some of the common neurotransmitters associated with feeling elated and happy.

When we fail to produce enough of it – chances are that we may end up feeling groggy and depressed. Serotonin, a so-called happiness hormone, is produced from the amino acid tryptophan, which can be found in foods like nuts, seeds, banana, dark chocolate. Similarly, there are no food sources that can provide dopamine directly, but foods rich in tyrosine and phenylalanine: the amino acids required to manufacture dopamine are found in foods like chicken, milk, cheese and eggs.

