

Boost Your Mood Without Medications

The following recommendations are helpful for recovering from mild anxiety and/or depression. Use these diet and lifestyle approaches to improve your mood naturally.

1. EAT A NOURISHING DIET

- Ensure adequate intake of calories, protein, carbs, fat, vitamins, and minerals
- Prioritize whole foods at each meal, including meats, vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds, etc.
- Use caution if avoiding a single macronutrient like carbohydrates or fat
- Work with your practitioner to identify any gaps in your current diet

2. AVOID INFLAMMATORY AND/OR “JUNK” FOODS

- Sugar, omega-6 fats, refined grains, chemicals, and preservatives are common in packaged and prepared foods
- Minimize or completely avoid these ingredients and stick to whole foods with little to no additives
- Cook from scratch as much as possible for more control over what you eat

3. GET ENOUGH SLEEP

- Poor sleep is significantly associated with depression and anxiety
- Make seven to nine hours of sleep nightly a top priority

4. EXERCISE APPROPRIATELY

- Exercise is known to improve brain functioning and boost mood
- Aim for 30 minutes of daily physical activity
- Avoid “overtraining,” which can cause mental disturbances

5. ASSESS YOUR LIGHT EXPOSURE

- Not enough natural light during the day and too much artificial light can have a major impact on your mood
- Get outside as often as possible during daylight hours
- Minimize light exposure after dark and avoid the use of backlit electronics before bed

6. SUPPORT YOUR GUT

- Consume probiotic-rich fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, etc., for increased beneficial gut flora
- Eat a wide variety of prebiotic, fiber-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, and starchy tubers to feed your beneficial flora
- Work with your practitioner to treat any existing gut infections

7. MANAGE YOUR STRESS

- Use daily stress management techniques such as meditation, yoga, or mindfulness to re-train your brain to respond differently to stress
- Try deep breathing to deactivate your “fight or flight” response

8. PRIORITIZE YOUR SOCIAL LIFE

- Work on building social support with new friends or improve current relationships
- Consider getting a pet that allows for companionship, social interaction, and physical touch
- Try volunteering or joining a faith-based community to increase your sense of purpose

9. TAKE TIME TO PLAY

- Unstructured “play” time can help reduce anxiety and depression
- Options for play include music, games, sports, dance, art, etc.

10. AVOID TOXINS

- Pathogens like mold or bacteria, heavy metals, and chemicals in cleaning and cosmetic products expose us to toxins that disrupt our cognitive function
- Switch to natural cleaners and toxin-free cosmetics
- Check your home for mold if mold exposure is suspected
- Consider installing a high-quality air filter to reduce airborne toxins and pathogens