



10 Foods That Fight Holiday Stress

Fight Holiday Stress By Eating These 10 Items

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Eat right, stress less. Sounds like a good deal, right? Especially during the holidays, when the last thing on your wish list is more stress. After all, over time, stress can increase your risk of fatigue, high blood pressure, heart disease, and belly fat—not to mention the odds you'll snap when your mom gifts you wrinkle reducer. This year, start the season right by stocking up on these foods that are made for fighting holiday insanity.

Blood oranges

It's a good thing this produce pick is in season during the winter: with more vitamin C than their bloodless counterpart, they're a perfect quick defense against drama. In a study published in the journal *Psychopharmacology*, German researchers attempted to stress out 120 people by asking them to give a speech and then answer difficult math problems. Researchers found that those participants who had been given high doses of vitamin C before the stress-fest had lower blood pressure levels and concentrations of the stress hormone cortisol. (Here are [12 more foods with more vitamin C than oranges.](#))

Oatmeal

A perky disposition depends on carbohydrates. Serotonin, your brain's primary mood-boosting neurotransmitter, comes from the amino acid tryptophan, which needs carbohydrates to reach the brain, according to Judith Wurtman, PhD, former MIT research scientist and co-author of *The Serotonin Power Diet*. Problem is, as cute as Christmas cookies are, their refined carbs spur an overproduction of insulin that's not only linked to sugar crashes but spikes in stress hormones as well. Reach for warm and gooey oatmeal instead, suggests Wurtman. It contains the healthy carbohydrates and fiber needed to boost your serotonin levels for a full three hours. [9 Signs You're Headed for a Holiday Meltdown](#)

Chamomile tea

Stress time is the perfect teatime. In a recent study from the University of Pennsylvania published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychopharmacology*, adults with mild to moderate generalized anxiety disorder who took chamomile extract for 8 weeks saw greater reductions in

anxiety than those who took a placebo. Plus, according to the University of Maryland Medical Center, chamomile promotes sleep so that your body can get the rest it needs to deal with stressors. [Foods That Help You Sleep](#)

Turkey

Who cares about family feuds when they're coasting through a turkey coma? "That's because turkey contains high concentrations of tryptophan, which is broken down to form serotonin to induce feelings of calm and even help your body make drowse-inducing melatonin," says Kimberly Gomer, a registered dietitian and educator at the Pritikin Longevity Center. But remember, if that tryptophan is going to reach your brain, you need to pair it with some carbs.

Almonds

What can't these little nuts do? Almonds are brimming with vitamin E and B vitamins, which may protect both your immune system and mood. A handful of almonds packs about 20% of your daily-recommended intake of magnesium, which fights free radicals in the body. Not getting enough magnesium can even cause fatigue and trigger migraine headaches, says Gomer. And since, according to the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, nearly seven out of 10 Americans don't get enough of the nutrient, it's a good bet that low magnesium levels have you on edge.

Grass-fed beef

Happy cows make for truly happy meals. Grass-fed beef contains more omega-3s and fewer omega 6s than its grain-fed counterpart, helping to mediate mood-wrecking inflammation in the body. Plus, it's a great source of the amino acid creatine, which can lift depression in women, according to 2012 study published in the American Journal of Psychiatry. Researchers believe that by increasing the energy available to the brain, creatine may help people better wrap their minds around problems. The result: those problems feel a whole lot smaller.

Sweet potatoes

Here's a whole new reason to give thanks: With more nutrients than their colorless cousin, sweet potatoes are an excellent source of the antioxidant lycopene, which improves mood by preventing the formation of pro-inflammatory compounds, like interleukin-6, that are linked to depression, says Melinda R. Ring, MD, Medical Director of Integrative Medicine at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. Sweet spuds are also high in other mood enhancers like B6 and magnesium.

Salmon

All omega-3 fatty acids are good for you, but when it comes to battling holiday stress, DHA and EPA are the ones you need. Found primarily in fatty fish like salmon, they support healthy brain

cell function, endorphin levels, and positive moods by keeping cortisol and adrenaline levels in check, Gomer says. Plus, just one serving of salmon contains more than half of your recommended daily allowance of vitamin D, which most women fail to meet during the winter because of a lack of sunlight. One University of Texas study published in Mayo Clinic Proceedings found that the lower your blood levels of vitamin D, the greater your chance of having clinical depression.

Lentils

Lentils are the perfect comfort food—and not just because they're hearty, filling, and perfectly warm on cold winter days. They are also packed with depression-fighting folate, which helps make serotonin and dopamine, possibly explaining why up to half of people who suffer from depression have low folate levels, according to Ring. "Folate's so important to mood that many anti-depressant medications even contain the nutrient." If you find yourself experiencing more high-lows than chronic lows, good news: lentils are also a great source of fiber, which can help stabilize blood sugar levels and keep you from snapping under stress.

Oysters

These suggestive shellfish contain more than seven times the zinc per serving of any other food. Why does it matter? Zinc deficiency can cause depression and anxiety, and supplementation is an effective form of treatment, according to a 2010 study from the Florida State University College of Medicine. If seafood isn't your thing, reach for cuts of beef and poultry. While whole grains and fortified breakfast cereals also contain zinc, their phytates can inhibit zinc's absorption in the body and dull its effect. [*This article originally appeared on Health.com.*](#)

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