

# Foods and Good Moods

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Just as foods can have a negative effect on moods and behaviour, so too food can have a positive impact. Ensuring our children's bodies have the right raw materials can help to optimise their mood, behaviour and performance.

We're emotional beings, but our brains work by sending out and receiving different chemical messengers, both good (happy) and bad (unhappy). Research shows that the four main reasons for an imbalance in children's happy and unhappy brain chemicals is: not enough light, not enough exercise, too much stress and nutritional deficiencies. An imbalance can lead to low mood, poor motivation, lack of concentration, behaviour problems and poor sleep, to name a few.

The major 'happy' messengers are serotonin and adrenalin. Put simply, serotonin helps mood and adrenalin helps motivation. Both of these messengers are made from protein, so ensuring your child gets enough protein is vital to keeping a healthy balance of the happy and unhappy messengers and so benefiting their mood and overall wellbeing. Their daily protein intake should be about the size of the palm of their hand (same for adults too).

Protein can be found in: all animal meat (keep it lean), dairy, tofu, nuts, seeds, eggs, legumes.

To work well, the protein building blocks need helpers. These are the nutrients zinc, magnesium, omega 3, vitamin C and the B vitamins. They are abundant in seeds, nuts, green leafy vegetables, deep sea fish, flaxseed, sprouts and most vegetables.

If your child still has problems with mood or behaviour after these dietary changes are made, consult a healthcare professional to discuss dietary balance, the possibility of supplementation and lifestyle factors.

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