



## EVEN COMMON FOODS CAN BOOST YOUR MOOD

BY TONISHA MELVIN

If you've been wrestling with life in a post-COVID era, you're not alone. Many people are struggling to achieve good mental health. Diet can be a key factor in getting results.

We already consume common foods that can make a major difference in our mental well-being. Dark, leafy greens, salmon, eggs, turkey, lentils, chia seeds, bell peppers, avocados, sweet potatoes, chocolate, and almonds offer great benefits.

Dark, leafy greens can boost your brain function, add vitamin B and iron, and help balance your blood sugar levels. Salmon is a great source of omega-3 fatty acid, which has anti-inflammatory properties. It can also help decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety and improve brain function.

Eggs are full of amino acids, omega-3 fatty acids, zinc, and magnesium, which can improve anxiety levels. They also have choline, which is helpful in strengthening neurotransmitters that can improve your mood.

Turkey contains tryptophan,

which helps to increase the natural serotonin levels in the brain. This neurotransmitter is responsible for the regulation of your mood and hunger.

Lentils are a good, nutrient-rich food that help to stabilize serotonin levels and provide a balance of carbohydrates, protein, fiber, iron, and vitamin B<sub>6</sub>. Lentils can also help control blood sugar levels.

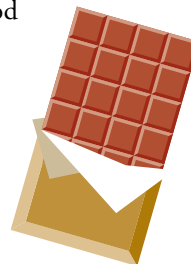
Chia seeds have helpful omega-3 fatty acids and also provide protein, fiber, calcium, iron, and magnesium. Bell peppers are a great source of the antioxidant vitamin C. This nutrient can help

neurotransmitters function better and improve your cognition. Sweet potatoes are rich in vitamin B<sub>6</sub>, which helps boost serotonin levels, and they also contain fiber. Avocados are rich in fiber and vitamins B<sub>6</sub>, B<sub>5</sub>, E, and C. They help to strengthen neurotransmitters in the brain. Almonds contain protein, fiber, magnesium, and vitamin E.

Last, but certainly not least, chocolate helps to boost your endorphin levels, which helps to improve your mood and cognition.

If you're pressed for time to cook, get creative. You can use turkey, veggies, and avocados to make a sandwich. Combine leafy greens with fruit of your choice to make a smoothie.

With these great options, your path to greater mental health can be tasty and fun.



**TONISHA MELVIN**, DNP, CRRN, ANP-C, PMHNP-BC (Mercer University) is a nurse practitioner who is president and co-CEO of DMV Medical Group in Kensington, Maryland, where she currently provides primary and mental health care. She was named among the African American Leaders in Health Care by *Becker's Hospital Review* in 2019, 2020, and 2022 and is a contributing author of *The Charge Nurse Leader Program Builder: A Competency-Based Approach for Developing Frontline Leaders*, a comprehensive curriculum and road map for developing nurse leaders and ensuring charge nurses are trained, mentored, and supported in their roles.