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## **Beat the Blues With Good Mood Foods**

In these tough economic times, everyone can use a little help boosting their mood. However, instead of turning to traditional comfort foods loaded with fat and calories like burgers and fries or mashed potatoes, there are healthier, nutrient-rich foods that can have a mood-boosting effect.

Foods fortified with vitamin D, which improves levels of serotonin in the brain, are particularly beneficial when it comes to fighting the blues. This powerhouse vitamin can contribute to a positive mood and help prevent depression. Our bodies produce vitamin D when exposed to 10 to 15 minutes of sunshine, but if you can't get outside, drink a glass of liquid sunshine—milk—it's an excellent source of vitamin D. Children and adults need three to four daily servings of dairy foods because of the unique combination of calcium and eight other vitamins and minerals, including vitamin D, these foods provide. Just three eight-ounce glasses of milk provide 75 percent of the recommended daily dose of vitamin D.

In addition to improving your mood, vitamin D can also help strengthen bones, especially in children. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics recently doubled the daily recommendation for vitamin D based on research showing that rickets – a crippling bone disease – is reemerging. In order to boost your intake of vitamin D, follow these simple steps:

- Serve milk with meals.
- Use milk instead of water when making hot chocolate, soups or sauces.
- Choose vitamin D-fortified yogurts and cheeses whenever possible.
- Include other foods high in vitamin D in your diet, including salmon, tuna, sardines, eggs and fortified cereals.

While foods high in vitamin D can improve your mood and strengthen your bones, there are other foods that can help boost your mood, including:

- Complex carbohydrates, such as whole grain breads and cereals, bananas, sweet potatoes and lentils, are high in fiber and increase serotonin levels, which make us feel calmer and less irritable.
- Wild salmon and trout are excellent sources of omega 3 fats which keep brain signals moving smoothly.
- Foods naturally high in folate, like spinach, oranges and sunflower seeds, can help treat the blues and lower the risk of Alzheimer's.
- Chewing crunchy foods, such as celery, apples, carrots and popcorn, can make us feel happier because it stimulates serotonin production.

Whenever you are feeling down, remember that you can turn your mood around with healthy, nutrient-rich foods instead of high-fat comfort foods. In order to beat the blues, incorporate daily exercise and regular meals that include nutrient-rich foods such as milk fortified with vitamin D, complex carbohydrates rich in fiber and fruits and vegetables naturally high in folate to combat the blues.

For more ways to boost your mood and recipes to help beat the blues, visit the American Dairy Association of Indiana's Web site at [www.winnersdrinkmilk.com](http://www.winnersdrinkmilk.com).