



# HEALTHY BITES

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## Six ways to eat your way to better mental health

Here are six ways to eat for better mental health:

### 1. Follow a 'traditional' dietary pattern

The Mediterranean diet has the most research behind it but others like the Norwegian or Japanese diet are also showing promise. Research with over 5000 adults in Norway found that a traditional Norwegian diet was associated with reduced depression in women and reduced anxiety in men. Whole foods and minimally processed foods are a cornerstone of all these dietary patterns – because they have been around way longer than ultra-processed foods.

### 2. Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit

Aim for five serves of veg and two serves of fruit each day. Results from a systematic review of individual studies showed that high intakes of fruit, vegetables, fish and whole grains are linked to a reduced risk of depression.

### 3. Choose wholegrains over highly processed carbs

Choose brown rice instead of white rice, wholegrain or wholemeal bread instead of white bread and swap sugary cereals for wholegrain options.

**Pro-tip:** replace half the white flour with wholemeal flour when baking to give your baked goods an extra boost of fibre.

### 4. Eat more legumes, nuts and seeds

Legumes include lentils, beans and peas. Legumes are a great source of fibre which as we know keeps our gut happy!

### 5. Aim for 2-3 serves of fish each week

Fish, especially oily varieties like salmon, sardines, and mackerel, contain high amounts of long-chain omega-3 fatty acids, which may play a role in reducing inflammation. Vegetarian sources of omega-3 fatty acids include chia seeds, hemp seeds, flaxseeds, walnuts and canola oil.

### 6. Swap junk foods for nutritious alternatives

When we are feeling low or stressed, we might find ourselves reaching for “comfort foods” – for many of us that’s foods like chips and chocolate. This is because we are biologically more likely to crave carbs, salt and sugar when we experience these feelings. These foods may help us to feel better in the short-term but can make us feel worse in the long run.

Looking after our mind is just as important as looking after our body. While it’s not possible to fully protect ourselves against mental illness, making small changes to our food and movement habits can reduce our risk of developing mental health issues and can help us to manage the symptoms.

# FISH WITH LENTIL SPINACH SALAD

**Prep:** 15 min

**Cook:** 20 min

**Serves:** 4



## Ingredients

- ▲ 8 baby potatoes, unpeeled
- ▲ 400 g no-added-salt brown lentils, drained
- ▲ 2 cups baby spinach leaves
- ▲ 250 g punnet cherry tomatoes, quartered
- ▲ 3 spring onions (including green tops), ends trimmed, chopped
- ▲ 1/3 cup parsley, chopped
- ▲ olive or canola oil spray
- ▲ 4 x 120 g fillets firm white boneless fish fillet
- ▲ lemon wedges, to serve
- ▲ 1 tbs balsamic vinegar
- ▲ 1 tbs honey wholegrain mustard

## Method

1. Place unpeeled potatoes in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to the boil and allow to simmer for 10 minutes or until you can easily pierce them with a knife. Drain and set aside.
2. While the potatoes are cooking, combine the brown lentils, spinach, tomatoes, spring onions and parsley in a large bowl.
3. In a separate small bowl combine balsamic vinegar and mustard to make a dressing. Mix dressing through the lentil salad.
4. Lightly spray a large non-stick frypan with oil and heat over medium heat. Add fish and cook each side for 2-3 minutes or until golden and cooked through.
5. Serve fish with potatoes, lentil salad and lemon wedges.



**HINT:** Good types of firm white fish include barramundi, snapper, hake, ling, perch, mackerel, cod, seabass and coral trout.



Being physically active can help you get fitter, sleep better, manage your weight, improve your mood and energy levels, and reduce your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. Doing some is better than none, and more is better!