It’s not always easy to think about a balanced diet when you’re busy, have to shop and cook for yourself, manage on a tight budget etc. But eating healthily is very important for psychological as well as physical wellbeing. If you keep your body healthy it will have a positive effect on how you feel.

So check out how your eating habits might be affecting your mood for better or worse. Here are some guidelines:

**DO:**

**Eat Regularly.** This will help keep blood sugar and energy levels stable throughout the day. Include foods that release energy slowly such as wholegrains (and other low Glycaemic Index foods). Eat breakfast! Take time to taste, digest and enjoy your food if you can.

**Eat Healthy Foods and a Balanced Diet.** Include:
- Fruit and Vegetables: 5 a day for health-giving vitamins and minerals.
- Some protein e.g. meat, fish, dairy, pulses, soya products.
- Some complex carbohydrates e.g. wholegrain bread, pasta, rice, oats etc.
- Food containing essential fatty acids: oily fish, seeds, nuts etc. These have been shown to have nutrients that may boost mood.

**Drink plenty of Water** — easy, cheap, and important for physical and mental wellbeing.
Many of us may benefit from eating/drinking less of certain things, so:

**DON’T:**

- Eat lots of food containing additives (E numbers).
- Eat too many foods containing saturated or hydrogenated fats (burgers, chips, pizzas etc.).
- Eat too many foods containing refined sugar (cakes, biscuits, chocolate etc.).
- Rely too much on take-aways or ready-meals (likely to contain unhealthy fats, sugars and additives). If you don’t want to cook, try the university Refectory for inexpensive healthy meals.
- Drink too much coffee or drinks containing caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant, triggers a stress response, & can impair sleep. Not a great idea if you are already stressed or not sleeping well!
- Drink too much alcohol. As well as risks to your health, excess alcohol has a depressant effect, so can make you feel worse, rather than better.
- Be too obsessional; remember that being healthy doesn’t mean completely depriving yourself of things you like, so be moderate rather than puritanical!

*Following these principles will help smooth the negative effects of fluctuating blood-sugar levels, which include irritability, poor concentration, fatigue, depression and food cravings.*

For more information go to:

- [www.foodandmood.org](http://www.foodandmood.org)
- [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)