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## Improve Your Mental Health Through Proper Nutrition

If you're looking for ways to help your body and brain stay healthy, consider including nutrition-packed foods in your daily diet. A healthy brain starts with a healthy gut, so enjoy these tips to make every bite count.

### **Healthy Carbohydrates**

Examples include foods like whole wheat bread and starchy vegetables like sweet potatoes and oats. They provide your brain with its main energy source, not to mention fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Healthy, [shelf-stable foods](#) to keep in stock include oatmeal, popcorn, canned beans such as baked or black beans, brown rice, and quinoa.

### **Protein Food Sources**

Examples include eggs, turkey, chicken, and fish. They provide energy as well as amino acids such as tryptophan, which is changed to serotonin in the body and influences both mood and sleep. Other protein sources, also rich in Omega 3 fatty acids, include salmon, nuts, seeds, and tofu. Shelf-stable items to keep in stock include canned fish such as tuna, salmon, sardines, natural peanut butter, and unsalted nuts.

### **Probiotic Foods**

These foods may improve digestion and reduce depression. Kefir and yogurt with active live cultures are some of the best sources, and both are often well tolerated in people with lactose intolerance.

### **Fruits and Vegetables**

They are simply amazing and it's hard to pick just one, two, or three that stand out as the most beneficial. Go for color, go for local, go for more! Aim for four cups most every day, such as dark green leafy vegetables, rich red berries, and

bright yellow peppers. They are a great source of potassium to help lessen the effects of sodium on blood pressure.

### **Limit Sugary and Processed Foods**

Eating too much of these foods can lead to inflammation, worsening anxiety, and depression. This can be challenging in times of stress when we tend to grab unhealthy comfort foods. Keep ready-to-eat healthy options available such as carrot sticks and ranch, celery and peanut butter, apples and cheese, and nuts with dried fruit.

A healthy change in diet is an important step in the right direction to improve your overall health, including your mental health; however, this may need to be combined with other forms of treatment best discussed with your therapist and/or physician. For a list of foods that improve mental health, visit [www.thechalkboardmag.com](http://www.thechalkboardmag.com).

Check out some healthy meals that you can make in the privacy of your own home at our [Healthy Eats Section](#)!

This article was written by Kiryako Sharikas.

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**Sheltering Arms** Physical Rehabilitation Centers offer a network of comprehensive rehabilitation and support services in Central Virginia.

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