



# ARBOR FARMS MARKET

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## Our February 2025 Newsletter for Healthy Living

### Diet and Depression

While there are hundreds of articles, dietary strategies, government agencies and food manufacturers designed to offer information on how to fight disease and improve your health, you may be surprised to find that until relatively recently, few were concentrated on brain health or mental disorders. Then in 2018, researchers reported the results of a study focused on finding the best foods to eat to help fight depression.

A team from the University of Toronto collaborated with researchers from the department of psychiatry at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons to tackle the initiative. According to the study: *"A systematic literature review was conducted to derive a list of Antidepressant Nutrients from the 34 nutrients known to be essential for humans using level of evidence criteria. Nutritional data was extracted for a subset of foods*



*with a high content of at least (one) Antidepressant Nutrient using a USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) database. These foods were analyzed for Antidepressant Nutrient density resulting in an Antidepressant Food Score (AFS)." The list of antidepressant foods based on the AFS is headed by watercress, the plant food with the highest score of 127%, with the highest animal-based food being oysters with a score of 56%; additional high-scoring foods are listed below.*

The prevalence of depressive

disorders, as well as the potential expense and current state of inadequate management of such conditions, was the driver for developing the AFS. The researchers stressed that each of the top foods can be integrated into any type of eating plan. You may notice that not all the foods are necessarily familiar to everyone throughout the world; many people in the U.S., for example, have not found bivalve foods or seafoods readily

conditions, including depression, are the leading cause of disability worldwide. Increasing treatment options, including by considering "antidepressant" foods, should be "imperative" for dealing with the growing number of people struggling with such issues. Further: *"A growing evidence base, including the first randomized controlled trial, suggests that dietary pattern and food choice may play a role in the treatment and preven-*

***"...food choice may play a role in the treatment and prevention of brain-based disorders, particularly depression."***

available, just as people in some areas may not have access to leafy greens or other vegetables.

However, availability doesn't always mean people take advantage of their easy access to healthy foods; in fact, most of the adult population in the U.S. fails to meet the daily recommendations for vegetable intake. The Healthy People 2010 initiative, designed to increase vegetable consumption and other healthy habits, revealed that only 27.2% ate three or more servings per day.

The scientists concluded that the top antidepressant nutrients should be considered when other researchers design future intervention studies, and by clinicians developing dietary options to help prevent depression. Their top 12 antidepressant nutrients deemed best for such disorders were: folate, magnesium, thiamine, iron, potassium, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin B6, selenium, zinc and long-chain omega-3 fatty acids (EPA and DHA).

The study noted that among people aged 15 through 44 years, mental

*tion of brain-based disorders, particularly depression ... They recommend following a traditional dietary pattern such as the Mediterranean diet ... and avoiding processed foods, for example those high in refined carbohydrate or sugar. Furthermore, an international consortium of mental health and nutrition researchers recently recommended 'nutritional psychiatry' become a routine part of mental health clinical practice."*

The basis for their research was centered, in part, around a meta-analysis involving scientists from Australia, Spain, Finland, the U.K. and France. Its aim was to address such disorders through dietary recommendations, along with a randomized controlled trial from 2017, dubbed "SMILES" (Supporting the Modification of Lifestyle in Lowered Emotional States). SMILES, incidentally, involved the collaborative efforts of multiple experts from centers based in neuroscience, psychiatric, dietary, medical and other research centers throughout

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## Care for Your Heart

Research funded by the British Heart Foundation and presented to the British Cardiovascular Society showed how beets may reduce harmful inflammation in people who have coronary heart disease. There's a lot to be said for this humble red root. Archaeological evidence shows that beets were a part of the diet dating back to the Third Dynasty and Greek records show beets

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***“...a daily glass of beetroot juice could be one way to get inorganic nitrate... to interrupt harmful inflammation.”***

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were cultivated around 300 BC.

Originally, it was the beet greens that were prized as food and not the fibrous roots. Ancient Romans, Greeks and Italians believed that beets were an aphrodisiac.

The roots were occasionally used for medicine but not consumed regularly until 1542. The plant is easy to grow and whether it's juiced,

cooked, pickled or fermented, beets have a wide range of health benefits.

Although packed with nutrients, up to 8% of each beetroot is simple sugar, so people who struggle with insulin resistance should partake carefully. In 1747, a chemist discovered how to extract the sucrose from beets, leading to the development of the beet sugar industry, which uses fewer resources than sugarcane.

Research presented at the British Cardiovascular Society conference in Manchester showed just one glass of beetroot juice each day could help reduce the harmful inflammation found in people who have coronary heart disease. According to the CDC, heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the U.S. and coronary heart disease is the most common type, killing 360,900 people in 2019. Nearly 20% of deaths from coronary artery disease occur in adults who are younger than 65 years.

The team engaged 114 healthy participants to test the theory that beetroot juice could help reduce inflammation in the endothelium and speed healing. They split the group in two. One group of 78 participants received a typhoid vaccine. This temporarily increased blood vessel inflammation. The researchers triggered a localized inflammatory response on the skin in the last 36 participants. Half of each group drank 140 milliliters (approximately 5 ounces) of beetroot juice each morning that was high in nitrate while the other

half drank the same amount of beetroot juice without nitrates.

The researchers tested blood, urine and saliva for biomarkers of nitric oxide and found those who drank the nitrate-rich beetroot juice had higher levels. In the group that received the typhoid vaccine, the researchers noted the endothelium function was restored, which is lost in the inflammatory re-

sponse. They also found that those with blisters healed more quickly than those who drank beet juice without nitrates.

The Guardian reported: *“The researchers believe the increased levels of nitric oxide helped to speed up how quickly the volunteers were able to recover from inflammation by switching key immune cells from a state that promotes inflammation to a more anti-inflammatory state.”*

Researchers from the Queen Mary University of London led the study. Dr. Asad Shabbir, clinical research fellow at the University, spoke with a reporter from The Guardian about the results: *“Inflammation is vital to protect the body from injury and infection. However, in people with coronary heart disease persistent inflammation can exacerbate the furring of the arteries, making their condition worse and increasing their risk of a heart attack. Our research suggests that a daily glass of beetroot juice could be one way to get inorganic nitrate into our diet to help to interrupt harmful inflammation.”*

Nitric oxide has long been known as a potent vasodilator that promotes healthy blood flow for efficient oxygenation of your tissues and organs. It also helps remove waste products and carbon dioxide. By relaxing and dilating your blood vessels, nitric oxide improves blood flow and lowers blood pressure. In conventional medicine, nitrates are used to treat angina and congestive heart failure. Research shows a daily glass of beetroot juice could lower blood pressure.

In addition to nitrates, 100 g of beets has a mere 43 calories. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, other nutrient values found in beets include: Fiber 2.8 grams; Magnesium 23 mg; Folate 109 µg; Vitamin A 33 IU; Calcium 16 mg; Potassium 325 mg, and Choline 6 mg. Beets also contain a phytonutrient called betalains. This compound gives them their reddish-purple color and helps reduce inflammation and

fight cell damage in the body. According to a study published in the *Journal of Functional Foods*, the antioxidant capacity of red beetroot is correlated with the betalain content.

Betalains also have anti-inflammatory, anticancer and antihepatitis properties, and have demonstrated the ability to improve cognitive impairment. The phytonutrient has exhibited antimicrobial and antimicrobial effects and studies have confirmed the phytonutrient can reduce glycemia without weight loss or liver impairment. The phytonutrient responsible for the beet's color can also add a red tinge to your bowel movements and urine.

Cruciferous vegetables also influence your heart health. These vegetables are widely recognized for their anticancer benefits, such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and Brussel sprouts. A study published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* examined the effects vegetable intake has on carotid artery measures, which are indicative of arterial health. They found those who consumed the most cruciferous vegetables had healthier carotid arteries than those who consumed the fewest. Narrow hard arteries restrict blood flow and can lead to a heart attack and stroke. The researchers found that on average, those who had at least three servings of cruciferous vegetables each day had thinner (healthier) carotid arterial walls than those who ate two servings or less each day.

The fiber and healthy bacteria found in traditionally fermented and cultured foods can also benefit your heart. Probiotic-rich sauerkraut has been shown to reduce inflammation, promote good health, improve high blood pressure, reduce triglyceride levels and maintain healthy cholesterol levels. Each of these factors benefits your cardiovascular and heart health.

Magnesium is also profoundly important for heart health and many people are deficient. More than 300 enzymes rely on the magnesium for proper function, and it is needed for a host of biochemical processes. The best way to get a healthy amount of magnesium is to ensure you're eating plenty of dark green leafy vegetables. Foods that are highest in magnesium include spinach, Swiss chard, acorn squash, artichokes, kale and green peas.

Reference: The Guardian, June 9, 2022. *Vegetable Facts, History of Beetroot*. MyFoodData, April 24, 2022. CDC February 7, 2022. *Circulation*, 1996; 93. *Cardiology*, 2012; 122. Queen Mary University, April 13, 2016. *Food Data Central, Raw Beets*. *Journal of Functional Foods*, 2016; 27. *Plants*, 2020; 9(9). *Global News*, February 25, 2014. *Journal of the American Heart Association* April 4, 2018; 7:e008391 Abstract/Results. Harvard Health Publishing, July 12, 2020. BBC Good Food, *Top 5 Benefits of Sauerkraut*. My Food Data, April 24, 2022.

## Diet and Depression continued from page one

Australia. It concluded with the premise that "dietary improvement may provide an efficacious and accessible treatment strategy for the management of this highly prevalent mental disorder."

It also noted that addressing the association between what a person eats

### ***"Evidence is steadily growing for the relation between dietary quality and mental health..."***

and what they don't would very likely impact the number of related deaths. However, the idea for nutritional psychiatry becoming a "routine part of mental health clinical practice" came from the researchers' use of Lancet Psychiatry's fundamental observation:

*"Evidence for nutrition as a crucial factor in the high prevalence and incidence of mental disorders suggests that diet is as important to psychiatry as it is to cardiology, endocrinology and gastroenterology. Evidence is steadily growing for the relation between dietary quality (and potential nutritional deficiencies) and mental health, and for the select use of nutrient-based supplements to address deficiencies, or as monotherapies or augmentation therapies."*

One important observation scientists made in the course of the featured study was that



deficiencies in long-chained omega-3 fatty acids, B vitamins, zinc, magnesium and vitamin D

are unquestionably implicated in the "pathophysiology" of depression. More specifically, the impact foods have on inflammation, and the influence of dietary fiber on your gut flora, are two important factors when looking at the best foods to eat for mental health. One source came from a study focused on the "powerhouse" fruits and vegetables most strongly linked to lowered chronic disease risk.

That said, the highest scoring plant-based foods for depression are: **Leafy greens** — Watercress, spinach, mustard, turnip, chicory and beet greens, Swiss chard, dandelion, collard greens and the herbs cilantro, basil, parsley and kale; **Lettuces** — Red, green and romaine lettuce; **Peppers** — Bell, Serrano and jalapeno; **Cruciferous vegetables** — Cauliflower, kohlrabi, red cabbage, broccoli and Brussels sprouts.

Vegetables are highly nutritious, often with an amazing array of

phytonutrients that can't be obtained from anything else, but there are downsides, thanks to modern food production. Case in point: although it's been labeled a probable carcinogen, glyphosate, one of the most common and problematic pesticides, continues to be used on

crops, poisoning many of your foods. Birth defects, infertility, neurological disorders, endocrine disruption and cancer are all listed as potential risks of exposure, according to multiple studies.

Genetically engineered (GE) growing operations are some of the worst examples of what's being done to your food, and GE crops are commonly sprayed with glyphosate. Buying organic is important, but there's a remedy when you're not sure how to deal with vegetables that may be contaminated with pesticides or other harmful chemicals - scientists report that washing your fruits and veggies in baking soda can get rid of as much as 96% of the toxic pesticides that contaminate most fruits and vegetables.

In regard to eating foods to offset depression, the focus has shifted from studying individual nutrients to evaluating overall dietary patterns. Traditional and whole foods (aka a healthy diet) can definitively be linked to symptoms becoming fewer and further between. One study, among others, notes that people on the so-called "Western" diet, rife with unhealthy fats and sugars, may have a higher risk of depression, attention-deficit disorder and other problems. As an example, an analysis known as the SUN cohort study followed more than 10,000 university students over a four-year period and found that those who stuck closest to the Mediterranean diet model had a more than 30% lower risk of developing depression in contrast to those with the lowest adherence to the Mediterranean diet.

The highest-scoring animal-based food groups include the following foods: **Bivalves** (soft-bodied invertebrates in a two-part hinged shell) — Oysters, clams, mussels; **Various seafoods** — Octopus, crab, tuna, smelt, fish roe (fish eggs), bluefish, wolfish, pollock, lobster, rainbow trout, snail, spot fish, salmon, herring, snapper; **Organ meats** — Spleen, kidneys, or heart, and poultry giblets. It also should be noted that papaya, lemons and strawberries, each with a score of 31%, had higher AFS scores than several of the seafoods,

such as snail, salmon, herring and snapper.

Fish is considered the ultimate superfood, and wild-caught Alaskan salmon is one of the best foods you can eat, but be sure when purchasing that it's not farmed fish, aka "CAFOs of the sea," as it's likely to be toxic due to its diet of GE soy and corn, not to mention mercury and other heavy metals. Herring are

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one of the top five healthiest fish, and has been described as a "local, sustainable food source, delicious, with flaky, mild meat and oil ..." Also, note that smaller fish like sardines, anchovies and herring generally have fewer contaminants and are high in omega-3 fats.

It's encouraging that the medical community seems to be grasping the fact that food — not solely medical intervention in the form of drugs and/or psychotherapy — may very possibly be the best hope we have of regaining the mental foothold required, individually and collectively, to both approach and be successful at life. To sum up, the top seven foods to help fight depression are as follows:

- 1.Oysters**, but avoid those from contaminated waters;
- 2.Mussels**, also be sure they're from unpolluted waters;
- 3.Seafood**, particularly wild-caught Alaskan salmon, herring, sardines and anchovies;
- 4.Organ meats**, but only those from grass fed animals (not CAFO animals);
- 5.Leady greens;**
- 6.Peppers, and**
- 7.Cruciferous vegetables.**

Reference: *European Journal of Nutrition*, December 2007; 46 (2):15-28. *World Journal of Psychology* September 20, 2018; 8 (3):97-104. *Nutrition and Neuroscience* April 2017; 20(3):161-71. *BMC Medicine* January 30, 2017; 15(1):23. *The Lancet Psychiatry* March 1, 2015; 2(3):271-74. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, November 1, 2015; 172(11):1075-91. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, October 2012; 13(10):701-12. *Preventing Chronic Disease* June 5, 2014. *JAMA Internal Medicine* October 30, 2017. *PLOS One* 2012;7(12):e51593. *British Journal of Psychiatry* August 2013; 203(2):154. *Archives of General Psychiatry* October 2009; 66





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