

Words on Wellness

Food and Mood

An emerging field of research is nutritional psychiatry. This examines the relationship between diet and mental wellness or how foods affect our moods. One reason food choices affect our brain so much is our GI system, commonly called “the gut”—which is directly tied to our brain and the way we process emotions.

Common comfort foods (i.e., high-sugar and high-fat) are the least likely to benefit our mental health. Other harmful habits include eating processed foods, alcohol consumption, irregular meals, and lack of sleep.

The best way to support your mental health through diet is to eat a variety of nutrient-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, lean meats, dairy, and whole grains.

Load up on these nutrients to fuel your brain!

Magnesium: spinach, pumpkin and chia seeds, soy milk, black beans, almonds, cashews, peanuts

Omega-3 fatty acids: walnuts, chia and flaxseeds, salmon, herring, sardines

Folate: beef liver, rice, fortified cereals, black-eyed peas, spinach, asparagus, brussels sprouts

Iron: oysters, beef liver, fortified cereals, spinach, dark chocolate, white beans, lentils, tofu

Zinc: oysters, chicken, pork chops, beef roast, Alaska king crab, lobster, pumpkin seeds

B vitamins: chicken breast, beef liver, clams, tuna, salmon, chickpeas, potatoes, bananas

Vitamin A: beef liver, herring, cow’s milk, ricotta cheese, sweet potatoes, carrots, cantaloupe

Fermented foods: yogurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut

Remember the quality of your diet is more powerful than any one decision you make in a day. Foods play an important role in mental health, but they won’t have a significant impact on their own if you aren’t prioritizing overall diet quality, self-care, and other stress management strategies.

Sources: [Harvard Health Publishing](https://www.harvardhealthpublishing.com/), go.iastate.edu/KP8LPX
[Mental Health America](https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/), go.iastate.edu/TZYXXY
[Health Line](https://www.healthline.com/), go.iastate.edu/S8ZYMP

White Bean Dip

Serving Size: 2 tablespoons | Serves: 8



Ingredients:

- 1 can (15 ounces) white beans (drained and rinsed) (cannellini, great northern, or navy)
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons oil (canola or olive)
- 2 small cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried herb (basil, parsley, oregano, rosemary)

Directions:

1. Place all ingredients in a blender or food processor. Blend until smooth.
2. Serve right away or refrigerate in a covered container for up to 4 days.

Tips:

- Serve with cut up vegetables or crackers. Use as a spread for a wrap or sandwich.

Nutrition information per serving:

90 calories, 3.5g total fat, 0.5g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 0mg cholesterol, 180mg sodium, 11g total carbohydrate, 3g fiber, 0g sugar, 4g protein.

This recipe is courtesy of ISU Extension and Outreach’s Spend Smart. Eat Smart. website. For more information, recipes, and videos, visit spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu

Creating a self-care plan

What does self-care look like for you? The emphasis being on “self,” meaning it’s personal. What works for you may not work for others. Self-care is about engaging in healthy activities that you can do to fill your cup.

There are eight “ACTION” areas that we can take to preserve or improve our health. These are listed below. As you read through them, consider what it is that you do for your own self-care under that dimension of wellness.

Community/Social Health—A sense of belonging, connecting with friends or your partner, attending community gatherings, volunteering

Intellectual Health—Exploring creative abilities and interests, expanding knowledge and skill, reading, brain games

Physical Health—Exercising, eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep, preventative care

Emotional Health—Adjusting to challenges, coping with life’s stressors, enjoying life, relaxation techniques, journaling

Environmental Health—Activities that focus on “reduce, reuse, recycle;” learning and relaxing in natural places (When was the last time you took a walk that reconnected you with nature?)

Occupational Health—Satisfaction from one’s work, coworker relationships, work-life balance

Spiritual Health—Activities that focus on expanding your sense of purpose and meaning in life, finding balance and peace

Financial Health—Steps for your current and future financial goals

Having a better understanding of the things that you can do to recharge better prepares you to handle life’s stressful situations. Consider creating your own self-care action plan with your favorite strategies in each of these eight dimensions of wellness.

Source: [SAMHSA](https://www.samhsa.gov), go.iastate.edu/JNRAUJ

Is shrinkflation affecting your finances?

We’re used to our favorite cereal costing \$3.50 per box, so when the price goes up to \$4.00 it’s something we notice. But do we notice when the box contains only 15 ounces instead of the 18 ounces it used to hold? From fewer toilet paper sheets to less toothpaste ounces, consumers are reporting “shrinkflation”—reduced product amounts for regular purchases, due to inflation.

Because we pay more attention to price when we shop, we don’t notice subtle changes in packaging or read details about the size or weight of a product. During periods of high inflation, companies may downsize products so they can keep prices unchanged, resulting in shrinkflation.

Unit pricing is a way to compare similar products to find the best value. Check out Iowa State University’s Spend Smart. Eat Smart. app or [webpage](https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu), spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu, for a unit pricing calculator!

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Human Sciences

extension.iastate.edu/

[humansciences](https://humansciences.iastate.edu/)

If you or someone you know is skipping meals, going hungry, or choosing between food and medicine, call 1-855-944-3663 to apply for assistance today.

Call Iowa 2-1-1 or Iowa Lifelong Links, 1-866-468-7887, for additional resources.

