



## Tackle the November Blues

Fall comes with its many pleasures, from cooking warm soups to drinking spiced speciality coffees to feeling cozy in our favorite sweaters. But as the days get shorter and colder, we may feel a seasonal decline in our mood. To tackle the November Blues and bolster our health, body and mind, let's make savvy choices when it comes to our diet.

## Five Health Tips to support physical and mental health:

### 1. Go fishing for omega-3's

Omega-3 is an essential fatty acid that's obtained from your diet for a healthy brain. Excellent sources are salmon, trout, anchovies, mackerel, tuna, and sardine. Vegetarian sources are walnuts, ground flax seeds, hemp seeds, olive and canola oils. Try to consume foods rich in essential fatty acids at least twice per week. For example, have 75g of salmon and add one tablespoon (15mL) of ground flaxseeds to your morning cereal. Although supplementation with omega-3 may help, it is not a must to be healthy.

### 2. Maintain a healthy gut

The microbes living in our intestines help in many body functions and directly interact with the brain. As 95% of serotonin (happy hormone) is made in the gut, nurturing healthy microbes has positive influences on mood. Nurture healthy gut microbes by consuming daily prebiotics and probiotics. Prebiotics nourish gut microbes and are found in fiber foods, such as beans, chickpeas, bananas, berries, kale, along with artichokes, garlic, and onions. Probiotics are healthy microbes found in foods such as probiotics yogurts and fermented foods such as kefir, sauerkraut, tempeh, and miso.

### 3. Sunshine vitamin to the rescue

Getting optimal amounts of Vitamin D is shown to have protective effects on the brain. From November to April, the sun's rays cannot provide us with enough Vitamin D, hence the importance of getting this vitamin from our diet. Focus on foods rich in Vitamin D like fatty fish and egg yolks or fortified foods like cow's milk and fortified non-dairy milk like soy, almond, oat milk and rice milk. A healthy adult aged 19 to 70 years old need an average daily amount of 15 mcg or 600 IU. Consider taking a vitamin D supplement during the winter season and consult a dietitian if you want information on Vitamin D supplementation.

### 4. Skip the sugar rush

Refined sugars are found commonly in commercial baked foods, candies, sweetened beverages, and foods with added sugar.

They result in large increases to our blood sugar levels followed by rapid and sharp declines. These fluctuations cause hormonal changes that trigger inflammation, stress, and mood changes. Replace refined sugars such as white pasta, bread and rice with whole grain breads, quinoa, farro, or legumes such as beans, and lentils. Also, replace sweetened beverages and fruit juices with water and whole fresh fruits.

### 5. Get your daily rainbow of produce

Many vitamins and minerals such as vitamin C, several B-vitamins, magnesium, iron, folate, selenium, are found in brightly colored fruit and vegetables. These nutrients play an important role in stabilizing mood and are essential for our brain functioning. Fill half your plate with colorful fruits and vegetables to ensure you are getting enough. For example, include avocados, beets, cantaloup, eggplants, bananas, mushrooms, and blueberries in a single day to achieve this goal.

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The month of November is challenging for many of us. Remember that making one change is the first step toward an improved dietary lifestyle. Take the opportunity to bolster your physical and mental health and consult a FSEAP dietitian if you need guidance on how to eat well to feel your best.