

FOOD, MOOD & MENTAL HEALTH – WHAT WE EAT, WHAT WE FEEL

Food doesn't "cure" mental health conditions, but what we eat can influence energy, concentration, sleep, and stress levels. Balanced meals help steady blood sugar, provide key nutrients for the brain, and support the gut–brain connection - all of which can affect mood.



HOW FOOD CAN AFFECT MOOD

- **BLOOD SUGAR BALANCE:** big gaps between meals or high-sugar foods can lead to energy crashes and irritability.
- **BRAIN BUILDING BLOCKS:** the brain needs protein, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals to function well.
- **GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION:** the gut microbiome communicates with the brain via nerves, immune pathways, and hormones.
- **INFLAMMATION:** overall dietary patterns can influence inflammation, which is linked to fatigue and low mood in some people.
- **CAFFEINE AND ALCOHOL:** can temporarily change mood and sleep, worsening anxiety or low mood.

SMALL CHANGES THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Add **one extra portion of fruit or veg** each day.
- Switch one refined carb to a **wholegrain option** (oats, brown rice, wholemeal bread/pasta).
- Include **protein at breakfast** to support steadier energy (e.g., yoghurt + nuts, eggs, peanut butter on toast).
- Plan a **mid-afternoon snack** if you dip (e.g., fruit + yoghurt, hummus + crackers, nuts).
- Aim for a **sleep-friendly evening:** limit caffeine after lunch and keep alcohol modest.

IMPORTANT NOTE

If you have an eating disorder history, diabetes, gastrointestinal disease, or you're considering supplements, seek advice from a qualified clinician you can do this by contacting the triage team at Six MHA or via GP/dietitian/pharmacist. If your mood is low, anxious, or overwhelming, support is available.



24/7 Confidential Helpline- 08008 807 373 | helpline@sixmha.org
www.sixmha.org Scan for the SIX MHA App - LVZ-489-754