

What is Serotonin?

Serotonin is a chemical that carries vital signals from one cell to the next. Serotonin is known to contribute to feelings of happiness and thus known as the good mood chemical.

What does serotonin do in the brain?

In the brain, serotonin influences mood, pain transmission, sexual behaviour, and appetite control (through the 'satiety mechanism' (feeling full). In effect, serotonin puts the brake on food intake by signalling when you have eaten sufficient food.



How is serotonin made?

Serotonin cannot be made by the body. It must come from food sources. Serotonin is made from a protein called **tryptophan**. Tryptophan is broken down into serotonin. To make serotonin our body requires a number of nutrients – B vitamins, Magnesium, Vitamin C, Iron, Chromium and **Oxygen**.

Tryptophan is found in **leafy greens, sunflower seeds, watercress, pumpkin seeds, mushrooms, broccoli, peas, soybeans, tofu, nuts (especially almonds) and kiwis**. Meats such as turkey and chicken also contain tryptophan but these high protein foods cannot easily cross the blood brain barrier. Scientists have found meals rich in carbohydrates are easier for tryptophan to cross the blood-brain barrier, increasing serotonin levels in the brain.

Focus on plant proteins along with generous amounts of complex carbohydrates, such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes. With this pattern in place, there is sufficient serotonin produced to maintain feelings of well-being.

This may explain the association between depression and carbohydrate cravings.

Protein → More carbohydrate → More tryptophan in your brain → more serotonin
happier moods!

Serotonin also produces melatonin (the sleepy hormone) so when you increase tryptophan foods into your diet, you not only increase your chances of feeling happier, but you also tend to sleep better at night.

Below are examples of foods, high in tryptophan, to eat to keep your mind and mood feeling good:

EAT ME WITH		THESE FOODS
<p><u>Tryptophan Foods:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leafy greens Mushrooms Cottage cheese Bananas Eggs Almonds Pumpkin seeds Avocados Milk, cheese, yoghurt Legumes e.g. beans, peas, pulses 		<p><u>Carbohydrate Foods:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brown Rice Wholemeal, Rye Bread Porridge Oats Jacket Potatoes Whole wheat pasta Oat cakes Muesli Whole wheat couscous Wholemeal Ryvita