

**Journeys** also has a more detailed booklet available on food & mood.

Simple changes to your diet can make a big difference to how you feel.

Eating healthily need not be expensive or time-consuming.

Give yourself the benefits of a balanced and varied diet of natural unprocessed food.

**Journeys** is the only organisation in Wales whose sole purpose is to offer support and understanding to people affected by depression, their friends, families and carers.

**Journeys** takes a holistic approach to overcoming depression through guided self-help and the development of skills and strategies. We help people to find their own route to recovery, building the foundations for sustainable and long-term wellbeing.

We facilitate a network of self-help groups where people can share experiences and coping strategies; offer information and advice; provide a unique range of publications and practical resources covering many depression related topics; run training courses to help people understand, manage and recover from depression; and co-ordinate mutual support services. We also offer a free information pack.

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## Depression & Food

Eating healthily can help you on your road to recovery from depression.

To request a free information pack or to find out more please contact us.

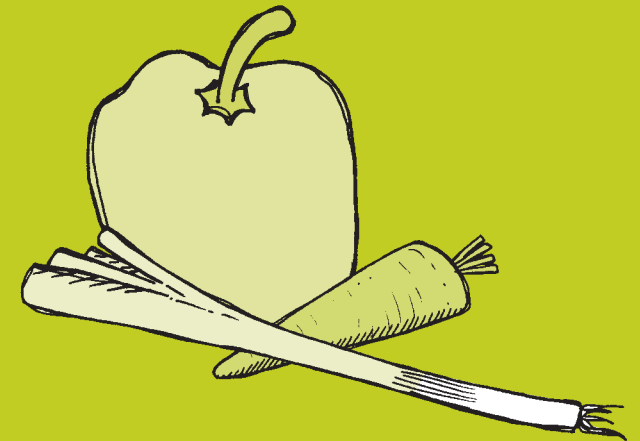
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## What is depression?

Everyone feels sad or upset sometimes, it is a normal response to difficult or distressing experiences. Depression is different. It is a serious condition that involves symptoms that are so intense that they interfere with day to day living over a prolonged period of time.

This includes feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, low self-esteem, sleep disorders and physical aches and pains.

Having a poor diet may add to the risk of developing depression but more often it is a consequence of the condition.

## Depression and food

As part of a broader approach to the treatment and management of depression, eating healthily is important.

Because depression is a complex condition it is unlikely that a change in diet on its own is going to be sufficient to make you well. However, having a poor diet impacts significantly on how you feel, mentally and physically. So eating healthily will help you feel better and may promote your recovery.

## Depression and poor diet

Depression can lead to a poor diet in the following ways:

- ↔ Changes to appetite, usually under-eating but sometimes over-eating
- ↔ Some antidepressants can also cause changes to appetite
- ↔ Anxiety problems may prevent or impair the ability to shop
- ↔ Lack of motivation/energy to prepare food
- ↔ Low incomes can make healthy eating seem like a challenge

Prolonged changes to appetite and a poor diet can have a damaging effect on your health and can make your depression worse. If you are concerned your doctor will be able to refer you to an NHS dietician who will be able to help you improve your diet.

## What is a balanced and varied diet?

The constant barrage of information about healthy eating can be confusing. Despite this, what you need to know about food has changed little over the past 50 years:

- ↔ Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables
- ↔ Base meals around starchy foods like bread, cereals, rice, noodles, pasta and potatoes. Try to use wholegrain varieties
- ↔ Eat some protein rich food – meat, fish, eggs and pulses. Try to use oily fish and white and lean meats
- ↔ Eat some dairy products. Try to use low fat options
- ↔ Eat less fat, salt and sugar
- ↔ Drink plenty of water
- ↔ Vary your diet

## Eating healthily

You do not have to completely change the way you eat. Just do what you can, and try to make healthy choices. Remember that simple changes can make a big difference. The following information may help:

- ↔ It doesn't have to be fresh to be healthy – frozen, canned and dried options are healthy too
- ↔ Try to have healthy snacks like a bowl of cereal, dried or fresh fruit or a wholemeal sandwich
- ↔ If your favourite foods are high-fat or high sugar, don't cut them out completely. Treat yourself once in a while, just balance them out
- ↔ Reduced fat versions are not always a healthy choice. They just have less fat than the standard version, which may be extremely high in fat
- ↔ Try not to add salt to food at the table or when cooking. We already get enough from preprepared ingredients and foods
- ↔ 'Hidden' vegetables count, such as tomatoes in a pasta sauce or onions in a stew
- ↔ How you prepare your food can make a big difference. Try steaming, grilling, poaching or roasting rather than frying

## Is eating healthily expensive and time consuming?

You will typically pay more for a ready meal than if you had made it yourself. If you cook you can make ingredients go further by making stews, casseroles and stir-frys. You can use a small amount of expensive produce such as meat in these dishes and add more cheaper vegetables, which is healthier too.

Healthy eating does not need to be time consuming. Boiling, steaming, stir frying or microwaving fresh ingredients will allow you to produce a healthy meal in less than 25 minutes. Stews, casseroles and other dishes that you can make a large quantity of are good because you can freeze leftovers in handy portion sizes for times when you don't feel like cooking.

## Superfoods and supplements

Superfoods are advertised as having health promoting benefits over and above their basic nutritional value. This includes foods that (allegedly) can cure depression. There is no acceptable evidence for these claims, nor is there any evidence that the use of food supplements has any benefit over eating a balanced and varied diet.

Superfoods and supplements are often expensive. It is usually possible to get the beneficial nutrients more cheaply from a healthy diet. For the same price you will probably be able to buy enough fruit and vegetables for a week.

If you do decide to try superfoods or supplements, remember that they should be used as a part of a healthy diet rather than a substitute for one. They should not be used as a replacement for formal treatment and if you are taking medication you should talk to your doctor first.