## FOODS THAT HELP WITH STESS AND ANXIETY

*Taking a pill is the way a lot of people are coping with anxiety and high levels of stress. The bad news is most of the time those pills don’t work or cause side effects that lead to long term problems. And guess what? Popping a pill rarely, if ever, fixes the problem. So why not get help naturally? Eating the right foods can do wonders. Chinese and Western nutrition look at food very differently. While Western medicine analyzes nutrients and what they do, Chinese medicine views food energetically.*

## Whole grains and Starches: whole-wheat bread, cereal, pasta, potatoes and brown rice are rich in tryptophan (an important amino acid that converts to serotonin in the brain. Serotonin is the all-important neurotransmitter that, among other things, promotes feelings of relaxation and calmness as well as alleviates symptoms of depression). Other anxiety-fighting foods contain high levels of tryptophan: egg whites, chocolate, fish, oats, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds and peanuts.

**Root veggies:** yams, potatoes, beets, carrots, broccoli and tomatoes.

**Dark, leafy greens:** chard, kale, spinach, arugula, watercress.

**Fruits:** blueberries, apples, bananas and melons.

**Omega-3 fatty acids** (seaweed, walnuts, flax seeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds, borage oil, primrose oil), which build healthy brain cell membranes and help facilitate neuron-to-neuron communication.

**Vitamins and Minerals**

**Magnesium** and **Calcium** are crucial to muscle contraction and relaxation, as well as nerve stimulation. Together with **Potassium**, they help to lower blood pressure. Chronic anxiety depletes magnesium from the body, causing additional anxiety, muscle cramps and headaches. Consume foods rich in these minerals, such as green leafy vegetables, whole grains, peas, nuts, dried beans, dairy products, calcium-fortified orange juice (rich in both calcium and potassium) and fresh fruits.

**Magnesium** also supports brain function and is helpful for mood disorders, including PMS and bipolar disorder.

**Chromium** (found in: broccoli, grapes, oranges, whole grains), which lessens depression, particularly in people who are also craving sugar. Chromium is a blood sugar stabilizer.

**Zinc** (found in: beans, nuts, oatmeal), which helps metabolize omega-3 fatty acids in the brain. Low zinc levels are often found in those suffering from postpartum depression.

**B-Vitamins:** The body's requirement for all the **B-vitamins** increases with stress. **Vitamin B6** and **Vitamin B12** are particularly important for a healthy immune system and nerve function. In addition, Vitamin B6 may increase the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter in the brain that acts as a natural relaxant. **Folic acid** (known as "folate" in food sources) is another B-vitamin related to serotonin levels. Low levels of folate decreases serotonin production. Foods rich in both B-Vitamins include legumes, bananas, nuts, fish, leafy green vegetables and dark greens, brown, red and wild rice, oranges, and poultry. People with Vitamin B deficiencies are more likely to have severe depression.