



# Improving Anxiety Through Nutrition

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## What is Anxiety?

- Anxiety can be defined as:
  - An emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure
  - A state of uneasiness and apprehension of future uncertainties
- According to the American Psychiatric Association, some of the most common causes of anxiety today according to study participants include:
  - Increase in dual income families over the past 30 years
  - Growing numbers of single parents
  - Social media
  - Constant accessibility
  - Increase in financial concerns
  - Health concerns
  - The state of the world (i.e. COVID, political climate...)
- Treatment options include psychotherapy, lifestyle changes (i.e. changes to your diet and exercise regimen), and medications, which typically are selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs).

## Foods/Factors That Exacerbate Anxiety

- Chronic inflammation
  - Causes:
    - Smoking
    - Obesity
    - Alcohol
    - Long-term exposure to irritants (i.e. polluted air, toxins)
    - Stress
    - Pro-inflammatory foods (i.e. refined carbohydrates, trans fats, processed meats)
      - Inflammation increases oxidative stress in the body, which disrupts neurotransmitter formation. It can also inhibit the production of GABA and serotonin—neurotransmitters that are important players in mental health.
- Nutritional deficiencies (specifically omega-3s, B vitamins, and certain minerals and amino acids)
- Poor gut health (AKA dysbiosis, which occurs when there's an imbalance of "good" versus "bad" bacteria in the gut microbiome)

- Fluctuating blood sugar levels (dysglycemia), which can be caused by eating too many added sugars, eating meals/snacks that are not balanced, and/or eating excess amounts of calories within one meal/snack

## How to Improve Anxiety Through Nutrition

- Stabilize blood sugar levels
  - Add more fibre to your diet
  - Eat meals and snacks that consist of health protein + complex carbohydrates + healthy fats
  - Engage in intermittent fasting to stabilize blood glucose levels/improve insulin sensitivity
- Improve gut health
  - Reduce intake of added sugars, alcohol, artificial sweeteners, and drugs
  - Manage stress levels
  - Increase intake of prebiotics and probiotics
  - Add fibre to the diet
  - Eat a wide variety of foods
- Reduce inflammation
  - Reduce intake of added sugars, alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs
  - Add more antioxidants to your diet through eating as many colours of the rainbow as possible
  - Reduce stress levels
  - Reduce your exposure to toxins and environmental pollutants
  - Increase your intake of anti-inflammatory foods like healthy fats, fish, vegetables, fruits, and unprocessed foods

## Supplement Recommendations

- Whole food multivitamin
- B vitamins (especially in the form of methylcobalamin for vitamin B12)
- St. John's Wort
- Synbiotic supplement (contains pre- and probiotics)
- Mental health blends that contain ingredients like GABA, 5-HTP, Magnesium, and L-Theanine

*Remember to always speak with a doctor or pharmacist before introducing a new supplement into your regimen. I also recommend having blood work done first to see what dosage might be necessary from a trained health professional.*

## Looking for more assistance?

Contact [hello@fresh-insight.ca](mailto:hello@fresh-insight.ca) to schedule an appointment for nutritional counselling and/or psychotherapy!

Feel free to also check our mental health & wellness blog at [fresh-insight.ca/blog](https://fresh-insight.ca/blog)