

NUTRITION FOR SUPPORTING THE BODY WHEN UNDER CHRONIC STRESS

When under chronic stress the demands on our body increase, what we eat can help to reduce the effects of this stress and help to increase energy, focus and keep our mood balanced. We can also support the function of our adrenal glands, which produce stress hormones by eating well.

Any time we eat, our food is broken down into macronutrients, micronutrients and water. This complex process allows us to derive energy from our food, obtain essential vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients, and collect the building blocks needed to make our immune cells, hormones, and neurotransmitters.

Aim to increase certain types of food:

- Eat more complex, high fibre carbohydrates such as wholegrain bread, brown rice, oats, quinoa, root vegetables, beans and pulses and low sugar fruit such as berries, apples and tangerines. It is important to use these to replace refined carbohydrates such as sugar, cakes, biscuits, white bread, pasta and rice and high sugar fruits (mango, grapes, pineapple).
- Choosing high fibre carbohydrates, such as those found in whole grains, legumes, and starchy vegetables provide the essential nutrients needed to support adrenal function and the fibre also helps slow the release of carbohydrates into the bloodstream, thus keeping blood sugars more stable.
- Make sure carbohydrates are paired with protein and/or fat at every meal and snack, in order to balance blood sugars. This reduces excess stress on the body and can help improve energy, focus and balance mood.
- GABA is a neurotransmitter involved in calming the nervous system, which helps to regulate our fight-or-flight response. Wholegrain, fibre rich carbohydrates are an excellent source of the prebiotic fibres that feed the intestinal microbes, producing neurotransmitters such as GABA and serotonin.
- Eat high quality protein, which can be found in fish, eggs, lean meat, nuts, beans, lentils, pulses and seeds. Regular protein is essential for repair in the body, and should be taken with each meal.
- Try to include magnesium in your diet – magnesium deficiency is common when under chronic stress and may exacerbate fatigue and anxiety. Good sources include lightly cooked greens, kale, swiss chard and spinach, kelp, squash, pumpkin seeds, steamed broccoli, halibut, nuts and seeds.
- Choose foods high in B vitamins, which are cofactors in adrenal hormone production, especially B5 which synthesises adrenal hormones. Eat the proteins listed above, as well as nuts, seeds, wholegrains and leafy vegetables.
- Eat vitamin-C rich foods, Vitamin C is present in high concentrations in the adrenal glands and its deficiency is a significant stressor on the body. Good sources are salad greens, broccoli, bell peppers and fresh fruit especially strawberries and citrus fruit.

- Eat a good balance of essential fatty acids (EFA) from oily fish (ie. mackerel, tuna, sardines and salmon), nuts, seeds and their cold pressed oils. EFAs help to improve the health of cell membranes and the activity of membrane-bound enzymes and cell-signalling pathways. EFA's may also help improve brain and cognitive function. Healthy fats like avocado are a good source of energy and nutrients.
- Never skip meals! Ensure that you eat at least every 3 or 4 hours, taking healthy snacks as necessary. Small, regular meals help to maintain energy levels and mood, while decreasing tiredness and irritability.

Try to cut down on the certain foods:

- Avoid excess stimulants: processed sugars, refined carbohydrates, alcohol, excess levels of caffeinated drinks (tea, coffee, cola) and foods (chocolate). This also includes fruit juice, sweets, biscuits and cakes. These can all adversely affect blood sugar balance.
- Avoid processed foods, they are often high in refined sugars and low in nutrients.

QUICK AND EASY MEAL IDEAS

Breakfast

Boiled egg with wholegrain toast

Poached egg with smashed avocado and wholegrain toast

Apple cinnamon overnight soaked oats

Wholegrain toast with almond or peanut butter.

Porridge, made with cinnamon and apple or blueberries, add peanut or almond butter and maple syrup or honey to sweeten.

Mixed berries, natural yogurt and chopped nuts

Supergreens smoothie

Chia seed pudding

Lunch

Jacket potato and tuna/ salad

Spinach, leek and pea frittata

Wholegrain wrap with humus or chicken and salad

Tinned sardine on wholegrain toast

Salad – containing any of the following –watercress, rocket, tomatoes, celery, beetroot, cucumber, avocado, grated carrots, olives and protein– eggs, prawns, chicken, tuna, cottage cheese, salmon, beans or puy lentils.

Soup - any soup that also has some protein in ie lentil and vegetable soup, bean and vegetable soup, chicken soup, carrot and lentil soup

Boiled eggs with wholegrain toast

Dinner

Salmon with garlic mushrooms

Chicken and spinach curry, with brown rice

Omelette with chopped herbs served with beetroot salad
Fish curry with brown rice and vegetables
Chicken stir fry with vegetables and cashew nuts, served with brown rice
Tofu stir fry with broccoli, peppers, carrots, onion, garlic, pak choi and brown rice
Chicken with steamed vegetables
Steamed fish with vegetables and roasted sweet potatoes
Bean/ Lentil or Chicken casserole with vegetables and brown rice
Chicken or lentil / vegetable curry with brown rice
Jacket potato with tuna/ humous/ cottage cheese and roasted vegetables
Fish Pie with steamed vegetables
Roast chicken and vegetables
Brown Rice Paella
Salmon kedgerree
Butternut and beetroot quinoa salad
Beetroot and chickpea falafals with brown rice and steamed broccoli.

Snacks

Vegetable sticks with guacamole
Apple and almond butter
Blueberries and natural yogurt
Humus with vegetable /carrot sticks
Oatcakes with almond butter/ cottage cheese/ peanut butter
Sweet and salty popcorn
Hard-boiled egg
Apple and handful of walnuts
Handful of raw, mixed nuts or seeds
Honey and peanut butter flapjack
Date energy balls

RECIPES

Supergreens Berry Smoothie

Serves 1

250ml water or coconut water
Handful of frozen berries
1 apple, cored and chopped
2 large handfuls of baby spinach
1 heaped tsp almond butter

Blend all the ingredients in a blender until smooth and creamy.
Drink immediately.

Chia seed pudding

50g chia seeds
1 cup almond milk
fresh fruit (for topping e.g. strawberries and blueberries)
nuts and seeds (for topping)
sweetener (to taste e.g. maple syrup or raw honey)

In a medium bowl, gently stir together the chia seeds and almond milk. Cover and set in the refrigerator overnight. In the morning, give the chia seed pudding a good mix, breaking apart any clumps. Top with your favourite fruits, nuts and seeds. If desired, drizzle on maple syrup or raw honey to taste.

Poached eggs with smashed avocado & tomatoes

2 tomatoes, halved
½ tsp olive oil
2 eggs
1 small ripe avocado
2 slices seeded wholegrain bread
2 handfuls rocket

Lightly brush the cut surface of the tomatoes with a little oil, then cook them, cut-side down, in the pan until they have softened and slightly caramelised.

Meanwhile, heat a pan of water, carefully break in the eggs and leave to poach for 1-2 mins until the whites are firm but the yolks are still runny.

Halve and stone the avocado, then scoop out the flesh and smash onto the bread. Add the eggs, grind over black pepper and add a handful of rocket to each portion. Serve the tomatoes on the side.

Apple and cinnamon overnight-soaked oats

1/2 cup rolled oats
1 tsp cinnamon
1 Tbsp maple syrup, or to taste
1/2 cup milk
1 apple

Place all the ingredients, except for the apple, into bowl the night before.

Mix it all together and refrigerate overnight.

In the morning, chop up the apple and add it to the mason jar.

Spiced lentil and root vegetable soup

1 large onion
3 cloves garlic
3 large carrots
3 large parsnips
2 medium sweet potatoes
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp mild curry powder
1 tsp ground cumin
1/2 tsp chilli powder
1/2 tsp ground ginger
1/2 tsp ground turmeric
150 g (3/4 cup) red lentils
400 ml/14oz can coconut milk
750 ml (3 cups) vegetable stock

couple of sprigs fresh thyme
small handful fresh coriander

Peel and finely chop the onion; peel and crush the garlic; peel and dice the carrots, parsnips and sweet potatoes.

Heat the olive oil in a large pan over a medium heat. Add the onion and cook gently for about five minutes until the onion has softened.

Add the garlic and the rest of the vegetables to the pan along with the spices. Continue to cook, stirring frequently, for another five minutes.

Rinse the red lentils and add to the pan along with the coconut milk and stock.

Bring up to the boil then turn down to a simmer and leave to cook, stirring every now and again, for 20-30 minutes until all of the vegetables and the lentils are soft.

Remove from the heat. Strip the leaves from the thyme and roughly chop the coriander, add to the pan along with some salt and pepper to taste.

Use a stick blender to blend the soup until it is completely smooth then serve.

Spinach, leek and pea frittata

Knob of butter

2 tbsp olive oil, plus extra

2 leeks

100g baby spinach

150g frozen peas

10 large free-range eggs

100ml whole milk

Small handful basil leaves

150g mixed lettuce leaves

Juice ½ lemon

Melt the butter and 2 tbsp oil over a low-medium heat in a deep, non-stick, medium (20-23cm) ovenproof frying pan. Slice the leeks into 1cm rounds. When the butter foams, add them and fry for about 7 minutes, stirring now and then, until soft and sweet.

Heat the oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas 4. Add the spinach and peas to the leeks and increase the heat to medium. Cook for 2-3 minutes until the spinach is mostly wilted and the peas are bright green.

Whisk the eggs and milk in a bowl and season. Add to the veg in the pan with the basil leaves (torn). Stir briefly to distribute evenly.

Bake for 20-25 minutes until firm. Cool for a few minutes, then put a serving plate on top and invert to remove from the pan. Dress the salad leaves with lemon juice and olive oil, season and serve with the frittata.

Salmon with garlic mushrooms

For the salmon

100g/3½oz salmon fillet, skin removed

1 lime, juice only

olive oil, for drizzling

½ tsp dried chilli flakes

1 tsp ground paprika

salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the mushrooms and broccoli

1 tbsp olive oil
100g/3½oz button mushrooms, sliced
100g/3½oz broccoli, chopped
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley, optional

Preheat the oven to 180C/160C Fan/Gas 4.

Put the salmon fillet on a lightly oiled baking tray. Drizzle over the lime juice and a little olive oil. Sprinkle with the chilli flakes and paprika and season with salt and pepper. Bake for about 10 minutes, or until cooked through.

Meanwhile, heat a tablespoon of oil in a frying pan. Add the mushrooms and stir-fry for 5 minutes. Add the broccoli and stir-fry until cooked to your liking. Add the garlic and fry for 1 minute, then stir in the parsley. Serve immediately with the salmon.

Chicken and spinach curry

2 tbsp. coconut oil
1 red onion, finely sliced
4 garlic cloves
1 tsp cayenne
3 tsp ground coriander
3 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp turmeric
½ tsp ground cinnamon
2 cardamom pods
4 chicken breasts, cut up into cubes
2 x 400g chopped tomatoes
400ml coconut milk
200g fresh spinach
200g frozen peas
Juice of ½ lemon
Salt to taste

Heat the oil in a large pan on a medium heat and add the onions

Cook for 3-4 minutes then add the garlic, cayenne pepper, coriander, cumin, turmeric, cinnamon and cardamom

Stir fry for a few minutes with 4 tbsp. of water until fragrant

Add the chicken and salt and brown for a few minutes – keep adding water if it gets too dry

Add the tomatoes and bring the curry to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes

Add the coconut milk and cook for another 15 minutes

Add the spinach and peas and cook until the spinach wilts.

Remove from the heat and stir in the lemon juice.

Serve with brown rice

Salmon Kedgeree

Serves 4

450 ml fish stock
250g salmon fillet, skin on
200g hot smoked salmon, flaked
2 tbsp fresh dill, chopped
1 tbsp coconut oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 tsp curry powder
½ tsp turmeric
175g brown basmati rice
3 spring onions, finely sliced
1 tbsp lemon juice
Handful of watercress, trimmed
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 hard-boiled eggs, halved

Bring the fish stock to the boil in a medium saucepan.

Reduce the heat to a simmer and add the fresh salmon. Poach for 6 – 8 minutes, then carefully remove the fish and reserve the fish stock.

Remove the skin from the fish. Flake into a bowl with the smoked salmon. Add the dill.

For the rice, melt the coconut oil in a large saucepan and fry the onions until soft. Stir in the spices and rice and fry for another minute. Add the reserve fish stock and bring to the boil. Cover with a lid, reduce the heat and simmer for 10 – 12 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and set aside to steam for 10 minutes.

Gently stir in the spring onions, lemon juice, salmon and watercress, and season to taste. Spoon onto plates and garnish with the hard-boiled eggs.

Beetroot Falafel

2 beetroots (just under tennis ball size)
2 large garlic cloves
250g (2 cups) cooked chickpeas
1 handful fresh coriander leaves
1 tablespoon ground coriander
1 heaped teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon sea salt

Ahead of time: Slice the rough neck/top off the beetroots and discard. Chop the remaining beetroot into cubes (1.5cm/half an inch cubed in size). Bake in the oven on a baking tray for about 45 minutes on a high heat. When done, take out and leave to cool until you are ready to make the falafels. This can be done ahead of time, or the night before when you are using the oven for something else.

When beetroot is ready:

Add all ingredients into a food processor and blend until everything has broken down. It doesn't need to be pureed completely, just broken down into tiny pieces so that when you compress, everything binds together.

Roll into balls and press the balls down into mini patty shapes.

Bake in 170-degree Celsius oven for 16 minutes, turning around half way.

Serve right away.

Butternut and beetroot quinoa salad

4 beetroots, peeled and cut into cubes
½ a butternut, peeled and cut into cubes
3 – 4 sprigs of fresh thyme
Olive oil
Sea salt & freshly ground pepper
Few handfuls of rocket leaves
Packet of cooked quinoa
Feta cheese, crumbled
2 – 3 tbsp pumpkin seed
Extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar to drizzle

Preheat oven to 200° C

Put the beetroot and butternut cubes and thyme into a roasting pan and cover with olive oil. Roast in the oven for 45 minutes. The butternut will cook faster than the beetroot so keep an eye out and you might need to remove the butternut and continue cooking the beetroot until cooked through. Once cooked, let it cool.

To serve, place the rocket and quinoa and on a platter and scatter the butternut on top. Place the beetroot on top of the butternut and scatter the feta cheese and pumpkin seeds over the salad. Drizzle with olive oil and balsamic vinegar just before serving.

Honey & Peanut Butter Flapjack

125g unsalted butter
70g soft brown sugar or light muscovado sugar
125g no-sugar-added crunchy peanut butter
75g honey, plus a little more to finish
Finely grated zest of 1 orange
Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
200g porridge oats (not jumbo)
75g dried fruit, such as raisins, sultanas and chopped apricots or dates, either singly or in combination
200g mixed seeds or nuts, such as chopped walnuts, pumpkin, sunflower, poppy, linseed and sesame

Grease and line a baking tin, about 20cm square. Put the butter, sugar, peanut butter, honey and grated citrus zests in a deep saucepan over a very low heat. Leave until melted, stirring from time to time.

Stir the oats, dried fruit and three-quarters of the seeds into the melted butter mixture until thoroughly combined. Spread the mixture out evenly in the baking tin, smoothing the top as you go. Scatter the remaining seeds over the surface and trickle with a little more honey. Place in an oven preheated to 160°C/Gas Mark 3 and bake for about 30 minutes, until golden in the centre and golden brown at the edges.

Leave to cool completely in the tin (be patient - it cuts much better when cold), then turn out and cut into squares with a sharp knife. These bars will keep for 5-7 days in an airtight tin.

Nutella Energy balls

10 medjool dates

2 heaped tbsp almond nut butter

½ cup of hazelnuts (skin removed)

1tbsp cacao powder

Pinch of sea salt

½ tsp cinnamon

2-3 tbsp. water

Mix in the blender and roll into balls

Place on a lined baking tray

Sprinkle with cinnamon refrigerate for at least 30 min