



Stress Management

Stress Relieving Snacks Are Soothing and Nourishing



When we feel stressed, the first things we tend to do is reach for immediate fixes, in the form of high fat and sugar-filled foods. Do you do this?

"As a caregiver I often snacked out of habit or emotional desire rather than from genuine hunger." Arleen, VA

Researchers are studying the links between what we eat and how we feel. There is evidence that changing our diet can alter our metabolism and brain chemistry, ultimately affecting our energy level, mood and the way we react or respond to stress.

The stress we feel as a caregiver may not be under our control, but what we eat and snack on each day is completely under our control.

Did you know...

- High carbohydrate content in snacks stimulate the release of serotonin, feel-good brain chemicals that help induce calm but they are loaded with calories, fat, sugar and salt. In the short run, they may

Nearly 72% of caregivers report having poor eating habits than non-caregivers.

make us feel better but in the long run, they are very unhealthy. The key is to not deprive yourself of an occasional sweet or soda but don't binge on them.

Dark chocolate, is a potent antioxidant, which is not found in milk or white chocolate. **Use in moderation!** American Psychological Association survey

- Healthy stress relief food contains the vital nourishment required to build strong healthy bodies to help us respond to life's challenges more easily. They also counteract many of the unhealthy effects of excessive stress.

- Choosing foods and snacks to calm your nerves can provide energy, rev up the immune system, lower blood pressure and help us function at our emotional and physical best.

Make some simple changes - Arm yourself with healthy snacks!

Listed are only a few of the many stress relief foods.

Almonds, Pistachios

Did you know?

- Nuts are a potent stress-busting healthy snack that you can't beat! Make sure they aren't heavily salted. They contain omega 3 fatty acids, essential fats that may promote heart health, and keep adrenaline from peaking.

Almonds are chucked full of helpful vitamins which may make the body more resilient during bouts of stress. To get the benefits, snack on a quarter cup every day.

Pistachios contain fiber and antioxidants. A handful a day can help lower blood pressure when that adrenaline rush comes.



Try using natural peanut butter on whole wheat crackers.

Enjoy Trail Mix using dried apricots, almonds, pistachios, salt free pretzels, sunflower/pumpkin/flax seeds, cinnamon flavored cheerios (in moderation) and a few dark chocolate candy pieces. Versatile, non-perishable and super-easy.

If you can't eat nuts

Eat fresh or frozen blueberries. They are easy to snack on, high in vitamin C, antioxidants and fiber.

Fruit and Vegetables

Did you know?

- Fresh and frozen are better than canned products.

Avocados help lower blood pressure. Half an avocado has more potassium than a medium-sized banana. Great alternative when craving a fat treat.



Try - Avocados in guacamole, in salads, on backed corn tortillas, in a turkey sandwich using whole wheat bread.

Cantaloupe, contains vitamin C a crucial component of fighting stress in the human body.



Calming - Adding slices of cantaloupe or other fruit, strawberries, red raspberries, black berries, peaches, pears, kiwi, pineapple to a small bowl of low fat/fat free cottage cheese.

Enjoy - Dip fruits in low fat yogurt.

Citrus Fruits, contain vitamin C antioxidants which counteract the stress intrusion and can help blood pressure to normalize after a period of stress.



Enjoy - Orange slices with a glass of pomegranate juice are a refreshing fruit snack that will invigorate your energy for

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the rest of the day. Pomegranates contain lots of antioxidants which reduce the damages inflicted internally by cellular stress.

Vegetables

Did you know?

• Veggies contain no unhealthy fats or cholesterol and are very low in calories while different colored fruits and vegetables contain different minerals, nutrients and antioxidants. Therefore it is recommended that we consume a wide variety of vegetables in order to receive the benefits from the various types.



Calming - Add to a spinach salad: mushrooms, dried cranberries, walnuts, strawberries and use yogurt as the dressing.

Need something crunchy?

Did you know?

• Raw crunchy foods can fight the effects of stress in a purely mechanical way. Munching helps release a clenched jaw that can ward off tension headaches.



Enjoy - Frozen seedless grapes or blueberries, apples, fresh carrots, celery, broccoli, popcorn-without butter...

Have a craving for...

- Ice Cream - eat plain yogurt with fruits and nuts on top
- Sweets - eat dried fruits such as apples, apricots, cranberries, raisins...
- Cake - eat a whole-wheat muffin, banana or pumpkin bread

Smoothies made with fresh fruits & vegetables are nourishing and digestible.

Groovie Smoothie

Ingredients:

- 2 small bananas, broken into chunks
- 1 cup frozen unsweetened strawberries (or fresh)
- 1 (8 ounce) container vanilla low-fat yogurt
- ¾ cup milk

Directions: In a blender, combine bananas, frozen strawberries, yogurt and milk. Blend until smooth. *(As an option add a few ice cubes and chop with the other ingredients in the blender.)*

More calming snacks!

- Oatmeal and chicken noodle soup send an amino acid to manufacture serotonin which makes us feel tranquil and more able to cope.
- Cereals high in fiber and fortified with B vitamins. Fiber is an energy stabilizer.
- Peppermint relieves stress! Enjoy this in tea or as a sugar-free candy. Use fresh mint in salads or to chew on.

- Soda - mix one part 100% fruit juice with three parts seltzer water
- Cookies - eat graham crackers, low fat Granola bars, whole-wheat muffins

Beverages

Did you know?

- Avoiding caffeine may help muscles tense up and produce an edginess
- Chamomile tea has calming properties.

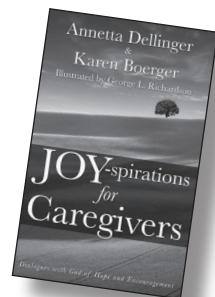
- Green tea, a cupful, may have antioxidant activity greater than a serving of broccoli or spinach.
- Milk (warm or cold) can soothe tension as well as easing anxiety and mood swings.
- Water is required by the body for virtually every function to take place. Drink 6-8 glasses a day.

Why eat complex carbohydrates?

- A complex carb food is better than simple carbs (sweets/sodas) because it takes more time for it to break down, thus avoiding the blood sugar to spike and plummet, leading to fatigue and moodiness.
- Complex carbs encourage the body to produce serotonin, a stress relieving chemical. Daily include whole grain breads, whole-wheat pastas, brown rice, high fiber breakfast cereals, oatmeal, beans, lentils, bran and barley. Your body will absorb them slowly.

**Be mindful of your snacks!
Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress.**

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These pages are guidelines. It is always wise to consult with a trained health care professional for appropriate recommendations for your situation.