

COMFORT FOOD IS MAKING YOU SAD

We all know that stress eating at the office is bad news for your belly, but now research suggests it's taking a big bite out of your mental health, too

Do a lap of Whole Foods and you'll see that healthy snacking is big business. From gluten-free Bounce balls to high-protein Trek bars, there are countless "virtuous" alternatives to a roll of Maryland cookies. And you'd be forgiven for thinking that they're an expensive ruse. However, researchers at Cardiff University believe that they could make all the difference in times of stress.

Reaching for unhealthy snacks when the panic of a deadline has you shackled to your desk won't only sabotage your fitness – it can negatively impact upon your mental health, too. Scientists allocated crisps, chocolate, or a piece of fresh fruit to test subjects, before

measuring their effects on mental well-being. The results were stark. Those snacking on crisps and chocolate exhibited greater symptoms of depression, fatigue and emotional distress in just 10 days. Those with a penchant for Tyrell's mature cheddar and chive will be perturbed to find out that crisps led to a 47% increase in depressive traits. Those snacking on fruit experienced none of this; instead, they became 32% less anxious.

While the researchers didn't pinpoint exactly why the fruit group felt so much happier, the answer might lie in fruit's ability to spike the brain's production of serotonin – a feel-good neurotransmitter that can help to bring about a happier state of mind and slice through anxiety. An apple works, but the new wave of snacks that rely on fruit for their sweetness may provide a far more satisfying alternative. Stock up your desk's snack draw accordingly.

> CHEAP THRILLS

Still not sold on expensive "health" snacks? Then try these wholefoods instead



PEANUT BUTTER

Everyone's top morning spread is high in magnesium, which plays a vital role in brain function and mood regulation. Go crunchy.



BANANAS

Carbs support the absorption of tryptophan in the brain. Then, vitamin B6 helps to convert this into the happy hormone serotonin.



DARK CHOCOLATE

A small square can cause the brain to release endorphins, associated with pleasure, and produce fewer stress hormones.



BRAZIL NUTS

Brazil nuts are a rich source of selenium. Low levels of this chemical element have been linked to anxiety and depression.



BLUEBERRIES

Berries are full of antioxidant flavonoids, which have a positive impact on brain health and can increase happiness levels.



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