**8 of the Best Healthy Foods to Eat When You’re Stressed Out**

During times of stress and [hectic days at the office](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/bid/339246/simple-tricks-to-cope-with-work-related-stress-0), you might think you don’t have time for a healthy meal. However, consuming fast food and [sugary snacks](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/8-signs-that-you-are-eating-too-much-sugar) will contribute to your feelings of stress and anxiety even more. Eating healthily is one of the best things you can do for your body during times of stress. Certain nutrients will help balance your mood and relieve any tension.

When you’re under a lot of pressure and [feeling anxious](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/feeling-anxious-reduce-anxiety-naturally-with-these-quick-remedies), your body produces a stress hormone called cortisol. High levels of cortisol can lead to high blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Over time, high levels of cortisol can have many negative effects on your health and even heighten your risk of certain diseases. When you eat to beat stress, you want to focus on foods that will reduce these cortisol levels and keep blood pressure levels in check.

Instead of stress-eating or skipping meals altogether, try eating healthy snacks and meals that contain stress-busting foods. Check out this list of 8 healthy foods to eat when you’re feeling stressed out:

**Spinach.** Dark, leafy greens are rich in magnesium – which plays a vital role in regulating muscle function, blood sugar levels, and blood pressure. Along with all the benefits magnesium provides for your body, it acts as a natural stress reliever. When you’re feeling overly stressed, a cup of spinach might be all it takes to feel an instant boost. Since not many of us are fans of eating plain spinach, try using the leafy green in a healthy [smoothie](https://greatist.com/eat/spinach-smoothie-recipes), or add some into your morning [egg-white omelet](http://www.yummyhealthyeasy.com/easy-spinach-egg-white-omelette/).

**Dark chocolate.** Good news for chocoholics! A couple of small pieces of dark chocolate will do wonders for stress and anxiety. A [study](https://www.livescience.com/7974-chocolate-reduces-stress-study-finds.html) found that people who rated themselves as highly stressed started to have lower levels of stress hormones after eating a bit of dark chocolate each day for two weeks. Of course, it’s important to keep portions of dark chocolate in check. We recommend a handful of dark chocolate covered almonds for a stress-relieving snack.

**Salmon.** This delicious superfood is packed with omega-3 fatty acids, which contain anti-inflammatory properties. Omega-3s can help offset any hormones (like cortisol and adrenaline) caused by stress and anxiety. As a bonus, eating salmon a few times a week has been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease. Check out these delicious and healthy [salmon recipes](http://www.health.com/health/gallery/0,,20414928,00.html#broiled-salmon-with-orzo-0) for some inspiration.

**Pistachios.** Cracking open some pistachios is a nutritious way to burn some stress. This nut is low in calories and fat, while high in fiber and nutrients that promote cardiovascular health. Snacking on pistachios will help lower your blood pressure and heart rate during times of stress.

**Milk.** Milk is a wonderful source of Vitamin D – which has been linked to feelings of happiness and an improved mood. Vitamin D deficiency can lead to higher stress and anxiety levels. Milk also contains magnesium, potassium, and calcium, which all contribute to a healthy diet.

**Kale.** This leafy green is one of the most calming foods. According to [Women’s Health](http://www.womenshealthmag.com/food/stress-fighting-foods), research from the Harvard School of Public Health found that people with high levels of carotenoids (an antioxidant found in kale) were significantly more optimistic. If eating a bowl of raw kale isn’t your thing, try baking crispy [kale chips](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipe/250329/kale-chips/) for a snack or a [kale pizza](https://cookieandkate.com/2016/kale-pesto-pizza-recipe/) for dinner!

**Green tea.** Green tea extracts provide many health benefits. It’s loaded with antioxidants and nutrients that can improve cognitive functions, aid in weight loss, and lower the risks of certain cancers. Steeping a cup of green tea will boost your mood and help [reduce psychological distress](https://bodyecology.com/articles/can-green-tea-reduce-anxiety-stress.php). So, instead of reaching for a soda when the afternoon stress sets in, sip on some green tea!

**Oatmeal.** A hearty bowl of oatmeal is a great choice when you’re feeling stressed and craving some hot comfort food. Eating complex carbohydrates, such as oatmeal, will cause your brain to produce serotonin (the feel-good chemical). Increased levels of serotonin will help balance your mood and melt away stress. Bonus tip: stir in some cinnamon to your oatmeal for an even more stress-busting meal!

Remember that no matter which foods you eat while you’re feeling stressed, the most important thing is to not overeat. Emotional eating can lead to weight gain, feelings of guilt, or even an unhealthy relationship with food. Sneak in healthy proportions of these calming foods into your regular diet to help battle stress!