

## Eat Better, Feel...Happier?

The benefits of good nutrition are sometimes obvious, but sometimes less so.

We use a lot of space in these newsletters covering the documented benefits of good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle, but we don't often cover how good nutrition can lead to a better mood, especially in these colder, darker winter months.

There's a field of medicine called nutritional psychiatry. Which makes sense once you think about it: After all, your brain is always "on," controlling your heartbeat and breathing, your movements and balance, and so much more, including your moods. To handle that 24/7 workload it needs to be properly fueled. If the fuel is less than high-quality, the results will be likewise unsatisfactory.

### What's Bad for Your Brain

The usual suspects can cause adverse consequences, both physical and mental: refined sugars, ultraprocessed foods, and excessive alcohol use. Multiple studies have found a correlation between a diet high in refined sugars and impaired brain function — and even a worsening of symptoms of mood disorders, such as depression. You might have felt better while you were indulging, but only in the moment.

If you overdid it with holiday feasting and felt not-so-hot afterwards, that's a very similar feeling to a drinker's morning-after hangover. It's your body and brain both telling you "let's not do that again."

### It Doesn't Have To Be A New Year's Resolution

Try out "clean eating" for just two or three weeks. To keep it simple for starters, cut out all added sugars and processed foods. Chances are you'll feel better both physically and mentally. Add an unhealthy item back into the diet, and you'd once again feel less content.

### Sounds Great, But I'm on a Budget

To eat budget-friendly without processed foods, focus on staples like dried beans, lentils, oats, brown rice, eggs, seasonal and/or frozen produce, and whole grains, cooking in bulk to save time and money. Prioritize whole foods like fruits, veggies, and legumes, buy generic, shop sales, and minimize sugary drinks for a nutritious, affordable diet.

Next time you go grocery shopping, stop in the produce department first. The more you can eat from this part of the store, the healthier you're likely to be. By adding more whole vegetables and fruit to your diet, you will get needed fiber, vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates and even protein.

Elsewhere in the store, read the ingredient lists on whatever you're thinking of buying. The shorter the ingredients list, the healthier the food is likelier to be. When shopping for beverages, avoid sweetened drinks of any kind. Stick to water, tea, or water infused with fruit.

**Check the back page for an easy, large print breakfast recipe!**

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# High Fiber Overnight Cinnamon Raisin Oats

(Makes 4 Servings - Can Be Refrigerated Up to 3 Days)

## *Ingredients*

1 very ripe medium banana (5 ounces)  
1½ cups whole milk  
1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats  
¾ cup raisins, divided  
¼ cup smooth natural unsweetened almond butter  
¼ cup whole-milk plain strained (Greek-style) yogurt  
2 tablespoons flaxmeal (ground flaxseed)  
¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon  
¼ teaspoon salt

## *Directions*

- 1) Place 1 banana in a large bowl; mash with a fork until smooth. Add 1½ cups milk, 1 cup oats, ½ cup raisins, ¼ cup almond butter, ¼ cup yogurt, 2 tablespoons flaxmeal, ¾ teaspoon cinnamon and ¼ teaspoon salt; stir well to combine.
- 2) Divide the mixture among 4 half-pint jars or bowls. Cover and refrigerate until the oats are tender and the mixture has thickened, at least 8 hours.
- 3) When ready to serve, top each portion with 1 tablespoon of the remaining raisins.