Get the Feel-Good Factor

Known as the 'happy chemical', serotonin is a neurotransmitter which plays a big part in a healthy mood balance. Serotonin also influences your sleep cycle, sensitivity to pain, tendency to crave comfort foods and how your body regulates blood pressure.

1. Go for a lunchtime walk

Sunlight hitting your retina triggers your body to synthesise serotonin. Even better if you can walk in nature – 'Vitamin N' is fundamental to mental and spiritual health

2. Increase your heart rate 30 mins a day

Aerobic exercise has been shown to have the strongest link with serotonin synthesis in the brain – think 'runner's high'

3. Focus on good thoughts

Remembering positive events has been shown to boost serotonin production

4. Aim to include oily fish at least 3 times a week, and sprinkle seeds on meals

Omega 3 fats Improve serotonin receptor sensitivity

5. Include good sources of protein

Especially those high in tryptophan, an amino acid which gets synthesised nto serotonin – seeds, wild salmon, meat, eggs (keep the yolks), beans

6. ...Alongside complex carbs

Oats, sweet potatoes, beans, brown rice are great mood boosters but beware refined high sugar carbs. They boost serotonin so well that they can become a dangerous 'go-to' when under stress or stopping smoking

7. Lose the booze (or cut down)

Alcohol is a depressant and regular use can disturb the metabolism of brain serotonin

8. Include fermented foods such as sauerkraut, kimchi and kefir

Did you know that 90% of the serotonin is located in your digestive tract? Your gut bacteria regulate serotonin synthesis

9. Avoid 'diet' drinks

The artificial sweetener aspartame contains about 50% phenylalanine which has been shown to deplete serotonin

10. Have your 5 a day, 8 if you can

Vitamin C helps the conversion of tryptophan to serotonin – top up your levels with plenty of plant foods such as peppers, kiwis and broccoli

10 serotonin boosting habits

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