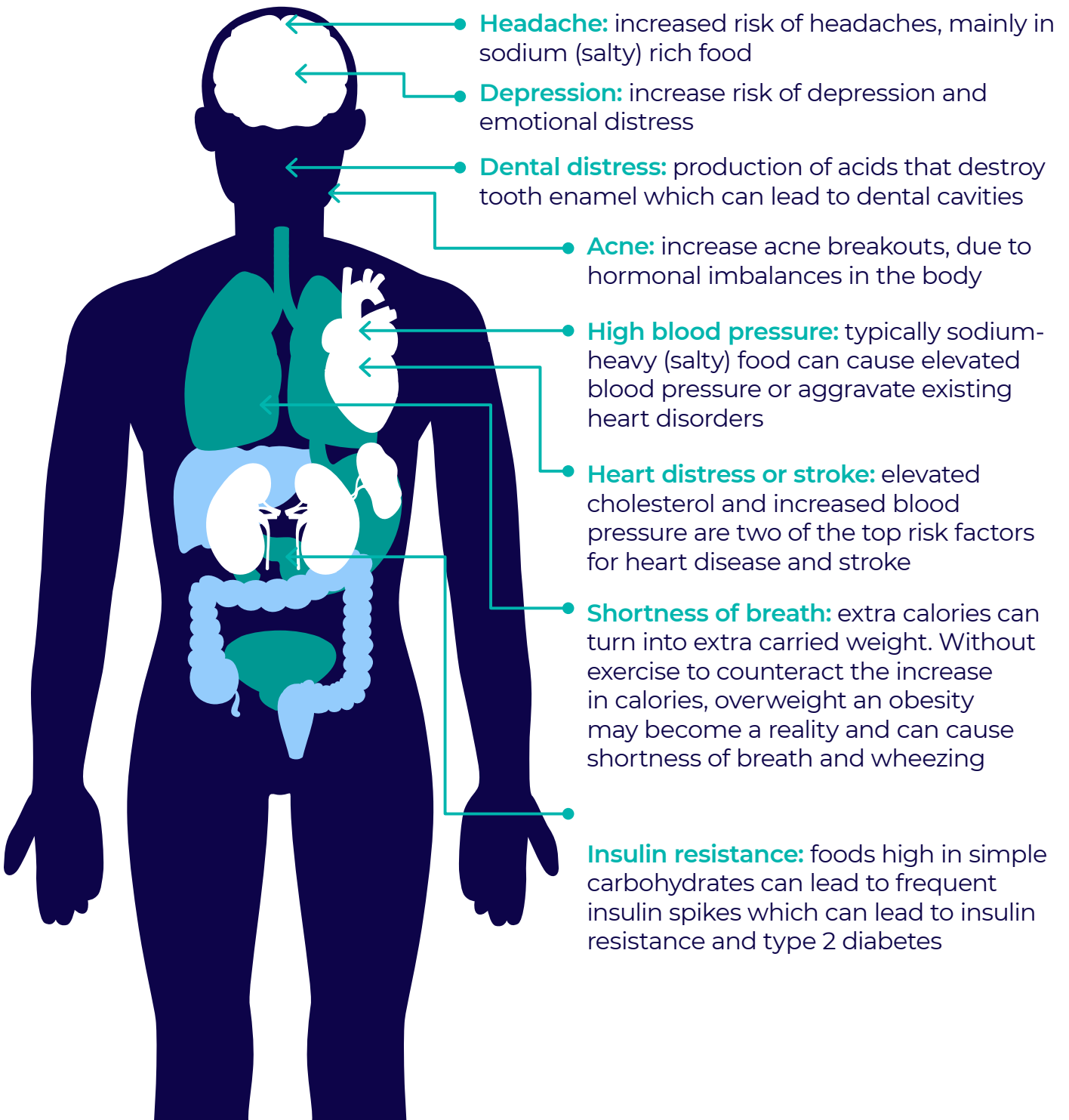


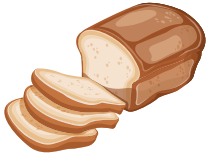
Food and Wellbeing: How eating the right food can support your physical and emotional wellbeing

Your brain is always “on.” It controls your thoughts, movements, your heartbeat, your breathing and your senses. With your brain working 24/7, it requires a constant supply of fuel i.e. food. The food you eat will directly affect the structure and how it functions, which ultimately affects your mood.

What effects can unhealthy food have on your body?



Examples of “good sources” of fuel which can help boost your mood



Complex carbohydrates: these include wholegrains such as oatmeal, brown rice, wholegrain bread, fruit, starchy vegetables such as potato, corn and peas. Complex carbohydrates release glucose slowly into your system, which can help stabilise your mood and increase psychological wellbeing.



Antioxidants: these can be found in brightly coloured foods such as blueberries and green leafy vegetables. Antioxidants are molecules that fight damage caused by free radicals. These are unstable molecules in our bodies that can destroy cells, cause disease and speed up the ageing process. Antioxidants can remove these free radicals and slow down the process of oxidation which causes the damage to cell membranes and other structures. They can reduce cell damage in the brain and this in turn assists with a reduction in depression or anxiety symptoms.



Healthy fats: these can be found in fish such as salmon, avocado, nuts and extra virgin olive oil. These sorts of fats are important for our brain and may have an important anti-inflammatory effect that helps to prevent depression.



B Vitamins: these can be found in wholegrains, eggs, milk, dairy products, meat, leafy green vegetables and beans. B vitamins play a large role in the production of our brain's happiness chemicals; serotonin and dopamine. B vitamins also play a large role in energy production which is important in maintaining mental wellbeing.



Probiotics & Prebiotics: our gut contains millions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ bacteria. Probiotics (also known as the ‘good’ bacteria) can be in fermented products such as yoghurt, probiotic milk beverages and kombucha. For probiotics to thrive, we need to provide them with a source of fuel called prebiotics. These can be found in foods such as garlic, onion, asparagus, peas and oats. Having the right balance of bacteria helps to improve mood and reduces symptoms associated with poor mental health or ill-mental health, such as depression.

One food group cannot do every job within our bodies – it’s vital to incorporate each of these into a balanced diet.

If you notice your diet doesn’t contain many of the foods mentioned, consider changing one thing over the next couple of weeks. It can be as simple as adding one extra vegetable to your meal.

Additional resources

If you or someone you know may need assistance, please refer to any of the below help lines or additional resources:

- The Department of Health – Australian Guide to Healthy Eating
- Better Health Vic – www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- Your workplace EAP (line open 24/7) – 1300 687 327
- Health for Life hub for detailed fact sheets and activities for you and the family

Resources upon request.