



the facts:  
tips for a healthy headspace



**headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

# eat well

## Food and your mood

Eating well can help give you more energy, sleep better, improve your concentration and keep a healthy headspace.

## How can eating well improve our headspace?

When we think about improving our mental health, we might not think about changing the food we eat, but research tells us there's a strong link between what we eat and how we feel.

It can:



Help us get a better night's sleep



Give us more energy



Improve our concentration – this can help with things like work and study



Make us less likely to crave foods with high levels of sugar, salt or fat.

Cooking can also help us relax, de-stress and understand more about the food we're eating.



## So how can I eat well?

We know that some foods are very good for our mental health and others can cause us to feel flat or tired.

Eating well for your headspace includes eating a balanced, variety of foods such as:

- colourful fruits and vegetable varieties (if you struggle with some vegetables, stick to the ones you love and try to give the other vegetables a go too)
- high fibre foods (like wholegrain cereals and bread, beans, chickpeas, lentils and nuts)
- fermented foods (i.e., unsweetened yoghurt)
- omega 3 oils (i.e., olive oil, fish – tinned is fine)
- protein (a variety of protein choices are good, but try and limit red meat to max 3-4 times per week).

Eating well matters, but if you're having a tough time, this can make it harder.

We know eating well can also be impacted by a lot of things like living arrangements, money and relationships.

Things that can help:

- Set yourself small goals that are easy to stick to. You could start by including fruit or yoghurt as your afternoon snack. Start small while you build your confidence.
- Sometimes how we're feeling affects what or how we eat; so it's good to develop your own coping strategies for these times that aren't related to food. Things like staying active, catching up with family or friends, or relaxation activities.
- Team up with a few friends and make batches of meals to share. This takes the pressure off making a meal everyday and will help keep costs lower.
- Buy in bulk or buy from the markets – often markets have cheaper fresh food at the end of the day.
- Supermarkets also reduce prices at the end of the day and have daily specials.
- Connect with your community and see if local community centres or cultural groups have cooking groups you can connect with.
- And always be kind to yourself – celebrate your wins, both big and small. They can help give you the confidence and motivation to keep going.

Remind yourself that eating well isn't always easy and can be full of ups and downs – be kind to yourself while you try out new things.



## Healthy habits

When you're feeling low or stressed, it's important to put healthy habits in place – to give yourself a better chance of coping with life's challenges.

Eating well is an important healthy habit, but it's not the only one. Things like staying active, getting enough sleep, doing things every day and spending time on your relationships are also important for good mental health.

## Getting support

There are lots of ways to look after your headspace.

Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health.

If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving despite your efforts, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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