

# The UConn Buzz



## Food-Mood Connection

CT Quit Line: 1-800-QUIT-NOW

CT Poison Control 24/hotline: 1-800-222-1222

Have you ever noticed that when you're "hangry", everything feels off but when you eat a healthy meal, your mood seems to settle? That's no coincidence. Research, including guidance from the American Heart Association (AHA), shows a powerful two-way link between what we eat and how we feel.

[www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

### The Vicious Cycle of Comfort Eating

When we're stressed, anxious, or down, many of us reach for comfort food: pizza, chips, ice cream. The AHA explains that this craving is rooted in our biology: our bodies interpret stress in fight-or-flight terms and seek quick, high-calorie fuel.

Unfortunately, these foods—high in added sugar and unhealthy fats—can backfire. Instead of improving our mood, they may increase feelings of depression and anxiety over time. When consumed regularly, they can reset our body's "normal," making even healthy eating feel jarring.

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### Breaking the Downward Spiral

We can break that loop. The AHA points to studies showing that people who eat **7–8 servings of fruits and vegetables per day** report feeling more calm, energetic, and positive. Over the long haul, diets like the **Mediterranean**

**diet**,—rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins—are linked to lower rates of depression.

### Mood-Boosting Foods

Here are some specific foods and nutrients that support mental well-being:

**Fruits & Vegetables:** These plant-based foods are consistently tied to higher self-reported levels of happiness. [University of Texas Austin \(UT Austin\)](http://University of Texas Austin (UT Austin))

**Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Found in fatty fish (like salmon), walnuts, and flaxseeds. Low levels of omega-3s have been correlated with depression and impulsivity.

**Dark Chocolate:** In moderation, dark chocolate may help lift mood and reduce tension—but the key is dark (not milk) and not overdoing it.

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### Practical Tips

#### Stock up on healthy snacks:

Keep bananas, nuts, carrot sticks, or other easy, nutritious options accessible at home, work, or in the car.

**Make gradual shifts:** You don't have to overhaul your diet

overnight. Try reducing processed foods bit by bit, and slowly add more mood-boosting nutrients like omega-3s or leafy greens.

**Be mindful of your emotional triggers:** Notice when stress nudges you toward "junk" foods—and have a plan (healthy snack, walk, talking with a friend) to redirect.

People who eat nutrient-dense diets rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fish report **significantly less psychological distress** and up to a **35% lower risk of depression**. [UT Austin](http://UT Austin)

### Why This Matters

Mental health isn't just about therapy, sleep, or stress management—it's also deeply tied to nutrition. Other research supports this too: for example, inflammation and blood sugar swings (from unhealthy or overly processed foods) can interfere with neurotransmitters in our brain, affecting mood. [Mass General Brigham+2PMC+2](http://Mass General Brigham+2PMC+2)

By making intentional food choices, we can support both our physical and mental well-being. It's a simple but powerful tool we all have.

Source: [AHA](http://AHA), [Mass General](http://Mass General),

## HAPPENINGS AROUND TOWN

### Winter Welcome, December 6 2025, 4-6:30 PM

Join the Mansfield Downtown Partnership in celebrating the start of the new season at our 13th Annual Winter Welcome! We invite residents and friends of all ages to join in the free, frosty fun. Winter Welcome is free and open to everyone! It is also a great opportunity to get your flu shot if you haven't already.

Explore The David Hayes Sculpture Fields, located at 905 South Street, Coventry is open every day of the year for self-guided tours during daylight hours. Admission is free. This cultural gem offers ten acres of mowed former sheep meadows and orchards populated with large steel sculptures. Individuals and families may wander the paths, explore the artwork, discover abundant wildlife, and reconnect with the natural world.

Cupid Made Me Do It, 2 mile Urban Challenge, February 7 2025, Race day registration starts at 8:30 at the First Baptist Church and the race starts at 10:00. A portion of the proceeds go to the **Windham Area Interfaith Ministry**.

This race is part of the schedule of events for the **Romantic Willimantic Chocolate Festival**.

## Island Swordfish Salad



**Ingredients:** 4 (8 ounce) swordfish steaks (or other fish steak), 2 ripe mangoes - peeled, pitted, and sliced, 1 (10 ounce) bag baby spinach, 8 cherry tomatoes, quartered, 8 kumquats, quartered, 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil, 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar, 1 tablespoon olive oil

**DIRECTIONS** 1. Preheat an outdoor grill for medium-high heat. Lightly oil grill grate, and place about 4 inches from heat source. 2. Lightly brush the swordfish steaks and mango slices with 1 tablespoon olive oil. 3. Cook the swordfish steaks on preheated grill until lightly browned on both sides, turning once, 5 to 7 minutes per side. After turning, arrange mangos slices over the steaks, and cook 5 minutes more. 4. Toss the spinach, tomatoes, and kumquats together in a bowl. Whisk together 1/3 cup olive oil and vinegar in a small bowl until well blended. Pour over the spinach mixture and toss to coat evenly.

To serve, divide the salad among 4 serving plates, and top with swordfish and mangoes.

## Dangers of Vaping

Vaping has become increasingly popular, especially among teens and young adults, but what may seem like a safer alternative to smoking still carries real health risks. According to the National Institutes of Health's *News in Health* article "The Risks of Vaping," e-cigarettes work by heating a liquid that often contains nicotine, THC, flavorings, and other chemicals. When this liquid is heated, users inhale more than harmless vapor—they breathe in compounds like propylene glycol, glycerin, and flavoring agents that were never designed for the lungs. These substances can irritate and damage lung tissue over time. Therefore, experts emphasize that vaping is far from risk-free.

The NIH also notes that vaping can lead to nicotine addiction, especially among young people. In fact, vaping is now more common among teens than smoking traditional cigarettes, and studies show that teens who vape are more likely to start smoking later on. Another serious concern is the use of THC-containing products or additives like vitamin E acetate, which has been linked to past outbreaks of severe lung injury. These risks grow when vaping products are obtained from informal or non-regulated sources, where ingredients may be unknown or unsafe.

For people who vape, acknowledging the risks is the first step toward reducing harm.

The NIH encourages anyone looking to quit to set a quit date, identify triggers, reach out for support, and imagine life without nicotine. People can access support through [Commit To Quit](#). This website and phone number provides education, referrals, and more.

The bottom line: vaping is not a harmless habit, and understanding the risks can help individuals and families make safer, healthier choices.

Sources: [NIH New in Health](#), [Cleveland Clinic](#)

Be Well is an employee wellness program provided through the Eastern Highlands Health District with funding from your employer. The goal of the program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

