

## Happy Hormones and How to Hack Them

### **What are happy hormones?**

Happy hormones are serotonin, oxytocin, dopamine, and endorphin. Generally, these hormones boost mood and promote well-being. Some alleviate anxiety and diminish depressive symptoms while others trigger joy, pleasure, or trust.

Serotonin is essential for mood, digestion, sleep, brain function, and circadian rhythm.

Oxytocin promotes bonding and trust, and helps regulate stress responses and calm the nervous system and higher blood oxytocin levels have been linked to greater perceived love, responsiveness and gratitude.

Dopamine is part of the brain's reward system; it makes us feel good and keeps us coming back for more. It's also involved in motor control and cognitive function, the brain's motivation and reward system, decision-making and impulse control, memory and attention, maternal and reproductive behaviors.

Endorphins inhibit the transmission of pain signals in the central nervous system by binding to opioid receptors (the body's natural morphine). When endorphins bind to receptors of the central nervous system, dopamine (the pleasure hormone) is released. Not only are they pain blockers, but they induce euphoria(think "runner's high").

### Happy Hormone Hacks and How-tos:

#### **Serotonin - Mood**

- Meditate
- Run
- Sunshine
- Walk in nature

#### **Oxytocin - Love**

- Play with a dog
- Play with a baby/child
- Hold hands
- Hug
- Give a compliment

#### **Dopamine - Reward**

- Complete a task
- Do a self-care activity
- Eat good food
- Celebrate a win

#### **Endorphin - Pain killer**

- Laughing
- Exercise
- Watch comedy
- Eat dark chocolate

## **Food and Mood**

It probably comes as no surprise that diet has an effect on the production of these chemicals, as well. Tryptophan, for example, encourages the production of serotonin. A diet of fiber-rich plant foods, with meat and fat in moderation, is associated with more abundant good gut bacteria, and a balanced whole-food diet has also been shown to promote mental health. Regular exercise is also known to boost mood, relieve anxiety, and combat depression. It has also been shown to promote tryptophan and serotonin levels.

Good-for-your-gut foods: apples, barley, beetroot, berries, chicory, citrus, garlic, mushrooms, oats, onions, whole wheat pasta

Tryptophan-rich foods: sunflower seeds, quinoa, milk, cheese, poultry, potatoes, eggs, salmon.

The mission of the Shaare Emeth Mental Health Initiative is to de-stigmatize mental illness and to provide education and community support for the mental health and well-being of children, teens, adults, and those who care for them.

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