Flaxseeds Flip the Switch on Depression

To heal depression, make sure you get lots of vitamins, minerals and fiber by adding flaxseeds to your diet. These flower seeds may be tiny but they’re bursting with nutrition, and they pack a super-sized punch when it comes to helping you beat the blues.

1. “B” good to your brain — eat flaxseeds. Think of flaxseeds as a shield for your brain! B vitamins, particularly folate, are essential to the synthesis and regulation of neurotransmitters and neuropeptides, the chemical messengers in your brain that allow neurons (brain cells) to communicate with each other. According to an Australian study of more than 200 women, a diet high in folate and vitamin B6, such as that found in flaxseeds, helped improve mental function, which is important for busting through depression.

2. Folate-rich flaxseeds reduce chronic inflammation. The poor Western diet, with its dependence on processed foods stripped of nutrients, leads to chronic inflammation and inflammatory diseases. This is a setup for depression. Flax contains folate, an anti-inflammatory that helps lower levels of homocysteine, a dangerous pro-inflammatory amino acid. According to a study published by the American Journal of Psychiatry, homocysteine disrupts the function of neurotransmitters and can lead to cognitive decline. A deficiency in folate is bad news for your brain!

3. Flaxseeds contain mood-mending minerals. Manganese is a trace mineral that helps synthesize fatty acids critical to healthy brain function. Studies show that it also helps form the powerful antioxidant superoxide dismutase (SOD) inside the mitochondria, the energy powerhouses of your cells, where it protects against oxidative damage. Magnesium helps build the enzymes that support brain metabolism. A recent study found that magnesium supplementation helped a group of elders improve their cognitive function. Two tablespoons of flaxseeds contains more than 30% of your Daily Value (DV) for manganese and more than 17% of your DV for magnesium.

4. Soothe depression with flax fiber. Modern Western diets are high on the Glycemic Index (GI), which measures how quickly foods are broken down into glucose, or blood sugar. High-GI diets, which are composed of processed foods stripped of fiber and nutrients, spike blood sugar rapidly and create the chronic inflammation that destroys mental health. Low-GI diets, by contrast, contain whole foods with all their fiber and nutrients intact. They slow digestion and prevent blood sugar and insulin spikes that set chronic inflammation in motion.

A study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that elderly people who ate a diet high in dietary fiber scored higher in cognitive tests than those who did not. Just 2 tablespoons of flaxseeds provide you with more than 21% of your DV for dietary fiber.

5. Ground flax is the best. If you buy whole flaxseeds, make sure you grind them up before you eat them. Whole seeds go right through you, without imparting any of their nutritional benefits, so grind a tablespoon or more in a coffee grinder first. Keep flaxseed refrigerated, to prevent its fragile oils turning rancid. Eat daily. Your body will thank you!