

An Anxiety Busting Guide

Anti-anxiety diet

Eating regularly

If your blood sugar drops you might feel tired, irritable and depressed. Eating regularly and choosing foods that release energy slowly will help to keep your sugar levels steady.

Slow-release energy foods include: pasta, rice, oats, wholegrain bread and cereals, nuts and seeds.

Quick tips:

- Eating breakfast gets the day off to a good start.
 - Instead of eating a large lunch and dinner, try eating smaller portions spaced out more regularly throughout the day.
 - Avoid foods which make your blood sugar rise and fall rapidly, such as sweets, biscuits, sugary drinks, and alcohol.
 - Avoid caffeine
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Staying hydrated

If you don't drink enough fluid, you may find it difficult to concentrate or think clearly. You might also start to feel constipated (which puts no one in a good mood).

- Quick tips:
 - It's recommended that you drink between 6-8 glasses of fluid a day.
 - Water is a cheap and healthy option.
 - Tea, coffee, juices and smoothies all count towards your intake (but be aware that these may also contain caffeine or sugar).
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Looking after your gut

- Sometimes your gut can reflect how you are feeling emotionally. If you're stressed or anxious this can make your gut slow down or speed up. For healthy digestion you need to have plenty of fibre, fluid and exercise regularly.
 - Healthy gut foods include: fruits, vegetables and wholegrains, beans, pulses, live yoghurt and other probiotics.
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Quick tips:

- It might take your gut time to get used to a new eating pattern, so make changes slowly to give yourself time to adjust.
 - If you're feeling stressed and you think it is affecting your gut, try some relaxation techniques or breathing exercises.
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Getting your 5 a day

- Vegetables and fruit contain a lot of the minerals, vitamins and fibre we need to keep us physically and mentally healthy.
 - Eating a variety of different coloured fruits and vegetables every day means you'll get a good range of nutrients
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Quick tips:

- Fresh, frozen, tinned, dried and juiced (one glass) fruits and vegetables all count towards your 5 a day.
 - As a general rule, one portion is about a handful, small bowl or a small glass.
 - For ideas on how to get your 5 a day, visit [NHS Choices](#).
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Getting enough protein

- Protein contains amino acids, which make up the chemicals your brain needs to regulate your thoughts and feelings. It also helps keep you feeling fuller for longer.
 - Protein is in: lean meat, fish, eggs, cheese, legumes (peas, beans and lentils), soya products, nuts and seeds.
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Quick tip:

- Whatever your diet, why not do some research into other foods that contain protein, and find something new to try?
 - For ideas on healthy recipes, visit NHS Choices.
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Eating the right fats

- Your brain needs fatty acids (such as omega-3 and -6) to keep it working well. So rather than avoiding all fats, it's important to eat the right ones.
 - Healthy fats are found in: oily fish, poultry, nuts (especially walnuts and almonds), olive and sunflower oils, seeds (such as sunflower and pumpkin), avocados, milk, yoghurt, cheese and eggs.
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Quick tip:

- Try to avoid anything which lists 'trans fats' or 'partially hydrogenated oils' in the list of ingredients (such as some shop-bought cakes and biscuits). They can be tempting when you're feeling low, but this kind of fat isn't good for your mood or your physical health in the long run.
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How can I eat more healthily?

Eating a healthy diet can do a lot to improve your mood and sense of wellbeing. Use these tips to start making positive changes in the way you eat.

- Take small steps
- Making changes can be really tough – especially if you're feeling low. It might help to start by making small changes rather than changing your whole diet suddenly.
- You might not feel better right away, and there might be times where you feel frustrated. But try to keep going! Even making very small changes can make a difference in the long term.
- Share meals and cooking
- Preparing your own food might feel daunting, but cooking with others can be a lot of fun.
- Ask your family, friends, colleagues, or other social groups to join in – they might be very happy to plan, cook and eat a meal together with you.

Get active

What is physical activity?

Being physically active means sitting down less and moving our bodies more. Many people find that physical activity helps them maintain positive mental health.

How can physical activity help my mental health?

- There are many studies which have shown that doing physical activity can improve mental health.
 - For example, it can help with:
 - better sleep – by making you feel more tired at the end of the day
 - happier moods – physical activity releases feel-good hormones that make you feel better in yourself and give you more energy.
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- Managing stress, anxiety or intrusive and racing thoughts – doing something physical releases cortisol which helps us manage stress. Being physically active also gives your brain something to focus on and can be a positive coping strategy for difficult times.
 - Better self-esteem – being more active can make you feel better about yourself as you improve and meet your goals
 - Reducing the risk of depression – studies have shown that doing regular physical activity can reduce the likelihood of experiencing a period of depression.
 - Connecting with people – doing group or team activities can help you meet new and like-minded people, and make new friends.

- But physical activity isn't always helpful for everyone's mental health. You may find that it is helpful at some times and not others, or just that it doesn't work for you.
 - For some people, physical activity can start to have a negative impact on their mental health, for example, if you have an eating problem or tend to over train.
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Sleep

How does sleep relate to mental health?

There's a close relationship between sleep and mental health.

Living with a mental health problem can affect how well you sleep, and poor sleep can have a negative impact on your mental health.

If you're having problems sleeping, you might:

- Be more likely to feel anxious, depressed or suicidal
- Feel lonely or isolated – for example, if you don't have the energy to see people or they don't seem to understand
- Struggle to concentrate, or make plans and decisions
- Feel irritable or not have energy to do things
- Have problems with day to day life – for example, at school or with family and friends
- Be more affected by other health problems, including mental health problems.

How can I improve my sleep?

Here are some tips for improving your sleep.

Some people find these ideas useful, but remember that different things work for different people at different times.

Try to establish a routine

- It could help to establish a regular sleeping routine or habits. You might need to try different things before you find what works for you.
 - You could try going to bed and waking up at around the same time every day.
 - Or it might help to go to bed only once you feel ready to sleep, but still get up around the same time.
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Think about screens and device settings

- Using screens in the evening, including on tablets and mobile phones, can negatively affect your sleep. It can help to think about when and how you use screens. For example, you could try:
 - Avoiding screens an hour or two before bed
 - Cutting down on screen time before you try to sleep
 - Avoiding stimulating activities, such as playing games
 - Using a blue light filter, night mode or dark mode – you might be able to find these options in your device settings and in individual app settings
 - Adjusting other settings – for example, changing the brightness, or using silent, flight or airplane, or do not disturb mode. Relax before you try to sleep
- You may find a relaxation routine can help you prepare for sleep.

Relaxation

Relaxation is a state where you feel calm and able to manage day-to-day life. If you have a busy life, this can be difficult. Relaxation has many mental and physical health benefits, and the techniques can be practised almost anywhere.

How can relaxation improve your mental health?

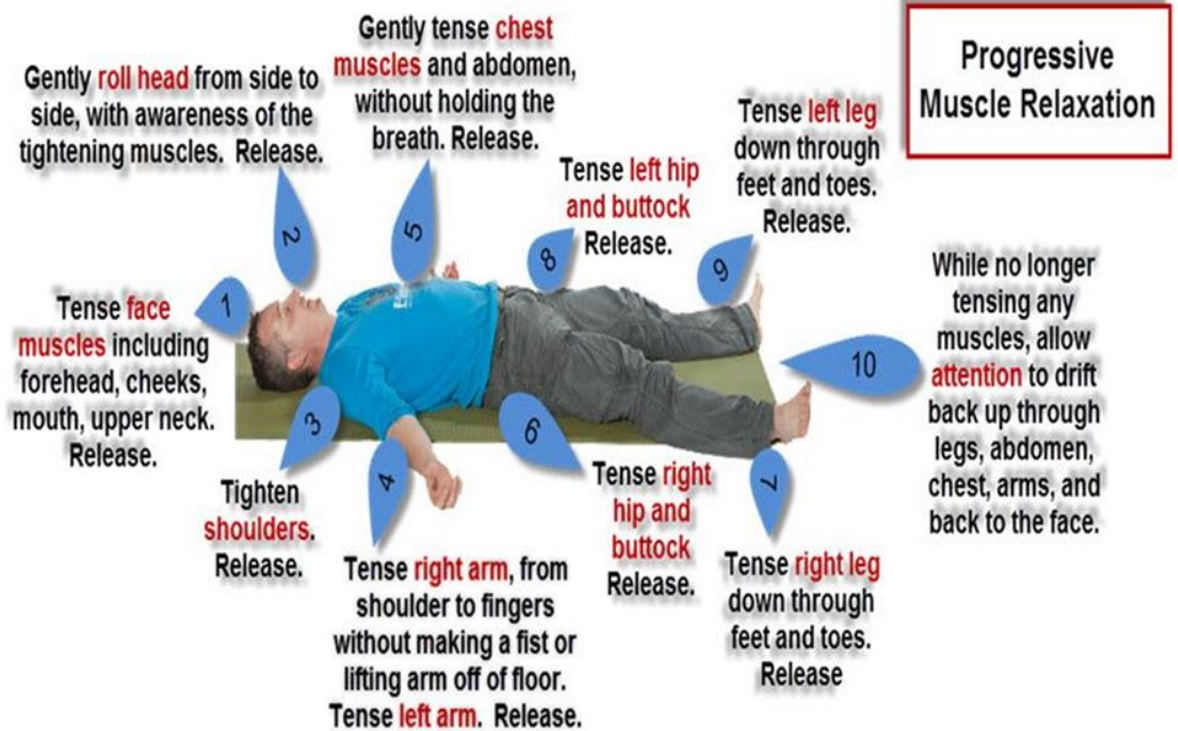
Relaxation reduces stress and the symptoms of mental health conditions like depression and anxiety.

Relaxation also has other related health benefits, including:

- lowering your heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate
 - reducing muscle tension and chronic pain
 - improving concentration and mood
 - reducing fatigue
 - reducing anger and frustration
 - boosting confidence to handle problems
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What are some relaxation techniques?

Relaxation techniques focus on muscle relaxation or breathing. An example is progressive muscle relaxation, where you tense then relax different muscle groups.



Or, if you have a computer or smart phone you could try this guided progressive muscle relaxation:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=progressive+muscle+relaxation+youtube+nhs&docid=607990179739927334&mid=695877F70000C5FDDE29695877F70000C5FDDE29&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

Other techniques include:

- Visualisation, where you create a mental image of a calming place for yourself.
- Deep breathing, where you refocus your attention on your breathing.
- Mindfulness, try this guided meditation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fUeEnkjKyDs>
- Exercise.

Ways to include relaxation in your life

- Find a relaxation technique that works for you and make it part of your daily routine, even if it's just for 5 or 10 minutes a day.
 - If you're interested in mindfulness, you may want to use mindfulness colouring books to help you focus on the present moment and take your mind off other things. This includes an aspect of art therapy, another relaxation technique.
 - Keeping a healthy work life balance helps with relaxation and managing stress.
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Exercise

- Ideally an hour of exercise a day is recommended for young people.
- Most of the hour should be either moderate- or vigorous intensity aerobic physical activity, and should include vigorous-intensity physical activity at least 3 days a week.
- This exercise can be done in short bursts rather than all at once.

Examples:

- Play a sport such as:
 - football, hockey, tennis, basketball, swimming
- Walk quickly, try to walk rather than take a bus or car on some journeys.
- Take the stairs rather than the lift or escalators.
- Go for a walk or run in the woods or by the sea.
- Enjoy your exercise and maybe combine it with some mindfulness.

West Hatch

Counselling Service

School counsellor:

M.Cleere