

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Eating Food to Improve Your Mood

You may have heard, “You are what you eat,” but what you eat can also affect how you feel. Food provides the building blocks your brain uses to make neurotransmitters—chemical messengers that influence mood, cognition, sleep, stress, and behavior.

In simple terms: what you eat affects how your brain makes and uses the chemicals that help control mood, focus, and sleep.

Why It Matters

Overall diet quality matters. A balanced eating pattern supports steady brain function, while highly processed foods may increase inflammation and disrupt brain signaling. Fiber and fermented foods also support gut health, which plays an important role in mood.



Fuel Your Mind

How Food Supports Mental Well-Being

Protein matters – Provides amino acids needed to produce neurotransmitters that regulate mood, focus, and sleep.

Vitamins & minerals – Nutrients like B vitamins, iron, magnesium, and vitamin D support brain function and help maintain balanced mood signals.

Carbohydrates – Help increase serotonin levels, which can improve mood, promote calmness, and support better sleep—especially when choosing complex carbs.

Healthy fats – Omega-3 fats support brain cell function and communication, playing an important role in mood and memory.



In short, a balanced diet gives the brain the building blocks it needs to support mood, focus, stress control, and overall mental health. Try this delicious and balanced recipe that is quick to put together and can be made in larger batches and frozen, all while supporting your brain and mood!

Fuel Your Mood with Every Bite

This balanced recipe supports brain health, steady energy, and overall well-being—perfect for meal prep or a quick, nourishing meal.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cans tuna (4-5 oz each), drained very well
- 1 cup cooked quinoa, cooled
- 2 eggs
- 2 tbsp ground flaxseed
- ¼ cup whole wheat breadcrumbs
- ¼ cup red onion, finely diced
- 1 small jalapeño, deseeded and finely diced
- ½ cup shredded zucchini, squeezed well to remove moisture
- ¼ cup shredded carrot
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ¾ tsp turmeric
- ½ tsp paprika
- 1 tbsp olive oil total, divided



Tuna Quinoa Fritters
8 fritters (4 servings of 2 fritters each)

INSTRUCTIONS

Prepare the Mixture

1. In a large bowl, gently flake the drained tuna.
2. Add quinoa, eggs, ground flaxseed, breadcrumbs, vegetables, salt, pepper, turmeric, and paprika.
3. Mix just until combined—do not overmix.
4. Let the mixture rest 5 minutes so the flax and breadcrumbs absorb moisture.
5. Divide into 8 equal portions and gently form into patties.

Cook the Fritters

1. Heat a skillet over medium-high heat and add ½ tablespoon olive oil.
2. Once oil is shimmering, add 4 patties, leaving space between them. Ensure the bottom is well browned before flipping over.
3. Cook 3–4 minutes per side, until golden brown and set through the center.
4. Remove fritters and repeat with remaining ½ tablespoon olive oil and 4 patties.

NUTRITION & FUNCTION SNAPSHOT

- Tuna + eggs: protein, B12, choline, EPA/DHA
- Flaxseed: omega-3 ALA, fiber, anti-inflammatory lignans
- Turmeric + paprika: antioxidant, neuroprotective compounds
- Colorful vegetables: phytonutrients + gut-brain support

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: 2
patties

Calories 230 kcal, Total Fat 9 g (Saturated Fat 1.5 g), Cholesterol 105 mg, Sodium 525 mg, Total Carbohydrate 19 g (Dietary Fiber 4 g, Total Sugars 3 g), Protein 20 g, EPA + DHA (from tuna): 300 mg, ALA omega-3 (from flax): 2,300 mg

Note: Even my picky teen daughter enjoyed these fritters! Pantry staples like canned tuna, flax seeds, and quinoa make these fritters easy to prepare and budget-friendly. Feel free to swap out vegetables for whatever you have on hand. This recipe can be easily adapted to accommodate any other leftover seafood or vegetables you have on hand. Not a fan of tuna? You could also swap it out for canned or leftover cooked salmon. I recommend serving these fritters on a bed of lightly dressed greens, roasted sweet potatoes, and a lemony yogurt sauce for dipping.