

Stress, Yoga and B Vitamins

It has been a little more than 7 ½ months since the pandemic hit the East Coast of the US. Since then, many Americans have lost their jobs, became food insecure, became at home teachers and are under more stress than ever before. Most families I know are juggling work and school from home for their kids; others are working from home and suffering from isolation or some sort of lack of human connection. All of these situations and other variants of it, cause stress. Research has shown that prolonged stress on the body can be a precursor to cancer, heart disease and other chronic conditions.¹ Not to mention the issues associated with increased alcohol intake in these times. Not only that, but stress also is the medium for anxiety disorders (like OCD, PTSD and generalized anxiety disorder [GAD]).¹ While being under the chronic stress of COVID and its effects financially, emotionally and physically, we need to turn our focus inward and help to manage and control our own reactions before this crazy train gets away from us.

There are some chemicals (neurotransmitters) in the brain that are triggered due to stress, which are not good for our bodies in the long run, Cortisol and norepinephrine are some. When other neurotransmitters, called GABA, serotonin and dopamine are excreted, they lower the stress neurotransmitters (like Cortisol). I'm sure that you've heard of at least one of these before as the "feel good" chemical, and that's exactly what they do! When cortisol and norepinephrine are lowered and the "good guys" are triggered, you have that "feel good" or "happy" feeling in your body. Some people mention this after a run, aka the runner's high.¹ Not being a runner, I don't notice that, however I do practice yoga. After a yoga practice/class, I always have a feeling of being at peace, or contentment. I've been to a few yoga classes where people leave before savasana (the resting period at the end of yoga aka your "reward for coming to yoga".) Here is what this pose looks like:

Corpse Pose **Savasana**



Full Pose



Modified with eye pillow & bolster

Savasana is a very important part of the practice and is a portion that you should stay to participate in. It seems to "cement the good guy neurotransmitters" into your body. The amazing thing is, that it's not just a "placebo" type effect, or a release of energy, but this is scientifically proven! Researchers have found

that **yoga and meditation** increase GABA and serotonin thereby decreasing stress and anxiety. Isn't that GREAT NEWS????!! 1

Food wise, there are no foods that specifically trigger an increase in serotonin... there are some hypotheses out there, but they need further research. HOWEVER, what IS proven is that B vitamins decrease stress, which can lead to less anxiety. Isn't that great too????!!!! 2

It's not just one specific B Vitamin, but getting the whole gamut of them is what is proving the most beneficial. Enriched flour helps us to reach our daily intake of these vitamins: Niacin, riboflavin, folic acid and thiamine. B12 is only found in animal products, that's why it's preferred for vegans to take a B12 supplement. Make sure you are doing this with a doctor's permission as there are some consequences with too much B12 and folate interactions. B12 is also required via injection for those who have had gastric by-pass surgery (specifically the Roux-en-Y by pass). So, to help aid in stress relief, make sure that you are eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins. 2

Here is a list of specific foods to get B vitamins in your diet:

Beans	Nuts and Nut butters
Oatmeal	Yogurt
Bananas	Whole Wheat bread
Eggs	Rice

If you have picky eaters or if you are picky and cannot eat a good variety, then supplementing with B Vitamins may be beneficial. Research has also found that there is a positive outcome in those who were stressed and took a supplement.³ I believe that if you take a multi-vitamin, that should be adequate enough.

Besides B Vitamins, Chamomile tea has also been shown to decrease anxiety when drank daily over 8 weeks. This tea can be very soothing and can help promote a good night's sleep³. One study had patients taking 2 capsules of chamomile daily for 4 weeks⁴, which produced a positive result for sleep, but those may be harder to come by and are more money than the tea. Drinking the tea also helps you to achieve your water intake for the day!!

Bottom line: Eat well; do yoga; meditate or pray; drink herbal tea= decreased stress and less chance of chronic disease.



Bon Appetit!

-- Chef Jen RDN/LDN, RYT-200

1.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4769029/#:~:text=By%20increasing%20GABA%20levels%2C%20meditation,major%20role%20in%20mood%20regulation.>

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3. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27912871/> Chamomile Tea Accessed 10/30/2020

4. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5470311/> Patients with capsules.