

# 5 Wholefoods to Support Anxiety



Anxiety is complex, but there is so much evidence to show that the food we eat can have a significant effect on our state of mind. Here are 5 of my favourite wholefoods that can support a calm, relaxed and anxiety free mind and body.

## **Flaxseeds (Linseeds)**

This tiny seed works to calm our mind in many ways. Firstly, it is the best plant source of Omega 3 fatty acids. This type of fat is strongly anti-inflammatory and helps to protect our highly valuable nervous system from stress. Studies show that there is an inflammatory cause behind many mood problems, including anxiety. Flaxseeds are also very high in fibre, which supports a healthy digestive tract and this is linked to a healthier mind. When our digestion is slow, we can reabsorb toxins in our colon and this can lead to increased toxic load in our body and poorer moods. This fibre also feeds our gut flora and studies show that this can help to balance our blood sugar levels as well as improve our moods due to the metabolites that the gut flora produce. One more interesting fact about the amazing flaxseeds is that it acts as a natural phytoestrogen, which means it can balance our natural Oestrogens in a safe and natural manner and we all know that our hormones can affect our mood! Flaxseed meal can be an easier way of digesting flaxseeds and can be made simply in your food processor at home.

## **Pumpkin seeds (pepitas)**

The humble pumpkin seed (or pepita) is a powerhouse of nutrients that is especially important in mental well being. Pumpkin seeds are an excellent source of Zinc, which is crucial for the production in the brain of our anti-anxiety neurotransmitter GABA. When we have low Zinc levels in our brain our Glutamate levels go up leading to inflammation and we know this can cause Anxiety. Our Adrenal glands also need a lot of Zinc to help us to cope with stress and we need Zinc for energy. Pumpkin seeds are a good source of Tryptophan, the precursor to Serotonin, which is our happy brain neurotransmitter and can help us to feel more relaxed and less anxious.

## **Leafy greens**

Another good reason to eat your greens! There are many varieties of leafy greens and perhaps the most nutrient dense are kale and spinach. One vital nutrient that they both contain is magnesium, an important mineral involved in over 300 different chemical reactions in our body. Magnesium relaxes our muscles, sending the signal to our brain that everything is okay and helps us to be calm. Magnesium also helps to make all three of our major brain chemicals that relate to mood being Dopamine, GABA and Serotonin.

## **Chia seeds**

These seeds have been a super hot topic for a long while now and they are still up there with the best 'superfoods' as their nutritional qualities are outstanding. In relation to anxiety, it is the high protein, omega 3 content and their high fibre levels that are the major players. Chia seeds are a complete protein source and their role, once they have broken down to amino acids in the body, is to build other proteins like hormones, enzymes and once again our friends the happy neurotransmitters in our brain. Without enough protein, we cannot make sufficient amounts of these compounds and we can be more prone to anxiety. The fibre in chia feeds our gut flora and the Omega 3's, same as in flaxseeds, play the important role of reducing inflammation in the body, including the brain, reducing anxiety.

## **Basil**

Holy sweet Basil, the common and luscious large leafed kind, has been used for centuries to calm and relax the mind. It is also called Tulsi and you may have seen it sold under this name as a tea. Basil is known to reduce feelings of anxiety, is used to help with depression and can improve memory and cognition. Studies show it can reduce cortisol, our stress hormone and can regulate our blood sugar levels. Simply use the whole leaves in a tea, dried is best or blend up into pesto and enjoy its full flavour.

Approaching anxiety gently and simply with whole foods is a natural and sustainable way of supporting this common condition.