

## **WILL HEALTHY EATING MAKE YOU HAPPIER? A research synthesis using an online findings archive**

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Healthy eating adds to health and thereby contributes to a longer life, but will it also add to a happier life? Some people do not like healthy food, and since we spend a considerable amount of our life eating, healthy eating could make their life less enjoyable.

Is there such a *trade-off* between healthy eating and happiness? Or instead a *trade-on*, healthy eating adding to happiness? Or do the positive and negative effects balance? If there is an effect of healthy eating on happiness, is that effect similar for everybody? If not, what kind of people profit from healthy eating happiness wise and what kind of people do not? If healthy eating does add to happiness, does it add linearly or is there some optimum for healthy ingredients in one's diet?

I looked for an answer to these questions considering the results published in 20 research reports on the relation between nutrition and happiness, which together yielded 43 findings. I reviewed these findings, using a new technique. The findings were first entered in an online 'findings archive', the World Database of Happiness, each described in a standardized format on a separate 'findings page' with a unique internet address. Next, I use links to these finding pages in the review paper and this allows me to summarize the main trends in the findings in a few tabular schemes, one of which is presented below.

Together, the findings provide strong evidence of a causal effect of healthy eating on happiness. Surprisingly, this effect is not fully mediated by better health. This pattern seems to be universal, the available studies show only minor variations across people, times and places. More than three portions of fruits and vegetables per day goes with the most happiness, how many more for what kind of persons is not yet established.

[Full text](#)

## Overview of 43 research findings on the relation between diet and happiness

Diet	Correlation with overall happiness		Correlation with affect balance	
	Zero order	Partial	Zero order	Partial
Fruit and vegetables	++	++++	+	+
Fruit	+			++
Vegetables				+
Fast food				- 0/--
Soft drinks	++	+		-
Fat avoidance	+			
Fiber intake	0			
Sweets	--	--		- 0
Cakes	--			
Grains		+		
Milk		+		--
Meat		+/- +		--
Fish and fish products		+		+
Olive oil				+
Nuts				+
Calories	+	+		
Protein	+			
Fat	+			
Healthy foods	+	+		

+ = positive correlation, statistically significant

+ = positive correlation, not statistically significant

+/- = positive and negative correlations, depending on control variables used

0 = no correlation

- = negative correlation, not statistically significant

-- = negative correlation, statistically significant

Use Control+click to jump to an online finding page with full detail about this study