

Power Foods That Boost Your Dopamine Levels

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter, and it is a chemical released by neurons. It acts as a messenger of the brain which is responsible for sending signals to nerve cells from the central nervous system. It allows the transformation of the information between the neurons. It is a unique hormone as it makes you feel elated and blissful.

It monitors your metabolism and works like a natural amphetamine(a natural drug that stimulates the central nervous system) and controls your energy, excitement and even makes you feel motivated. Dopamine is often called a 'feel-good hormone' as its release makes you feel more euphoric.

But the question is, can you control its release? Can certain foods help you to control or boost this 'happy hormone'? Scroll down and let's find out!

Role Of Dopamine In Our Body

Dopamine is an organic chemical released by dopaminergic neurons (nerve cells) located in the midbrain. It is not only present in the human body but also synthesized in most animals and plants. It functions as a hormone and as well as a neurotransmitter. Dopamine plays many important roles in your brain and body. Though these neurons are few in number, they play a significant role in mood, behaviour, addiction, reward, and stress.

In our brain, it functions as a neurotransmitter to transmit signals to other nerve cells. There are distinct dopamine pathways for learning, memory, focus, motivation, decision-making etc, and the major one is the motivational component which rewards in motivated behaviour. It even controls our movement too, and the deficiency of dopamine may lead to Parkinson's disease, schizophrenia(mental illness), and ADHD - attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Aside from its "high-spirited" function, dopamine also involved in many other body functions, which include:

- Blood flow
- Heart and kidney function
- Proper digestion
- Executive functioning
- Pain processing
- Mood and emotions
- Motor control
- Insulin regulation
- Sleep
- Stress response

The thing is that dopamine doesn't act alone. It works with the combination of other neurotransmitters and hormones, which include serotonin and adrenaline.

Foods That Boosts Dopamine Levels

So, we know the benefits of dopamine. Can we boost the production of dopamine? If so, what should we eat? Yes, foods that are rich in tyrosine(the amino acid which dopamine is made from) will give you the building blocks to boost dopamine production. Let's have a look at some of the foods;

- Dairy Products like cheese, milk, and yoghurt can boost the production of dopamine. Cheese consists of tyramine, which is transformed into dopamine in the body.
- Nuts like walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds are rich in vitamin B6 and can help your brain to produce dopamine. Walnuts contain DHA, omega-3 fatty acid responsible for the modulation of dopamine levels.
- Studies say that Omega-3 fatty acids can normalize dopamine levels and also reduces anxiety-like behaviours. Foods such as salmon fish, tuna fish and chia seeds are rich in omega-3 fatty acids.

- Studies have proven that dark chocolate might interact with neurotransmitters and may trigger the release of dopamine. After eating the chocolate, it imparts a pleasurable sensory feeling.
- In a study, it is shown that the antioxidants in strawberry and spinach help in dopamine release. The study also suggests that along with antioxidants, the other nutrients in fruits like bananas, avocados, oranges, apples and veggies like velvet beans, peas, tomatoes, aubergine may also contribute to dopamine release.

Along with the foods mentioned above - meat, eggs, oatmeal, green tea, coffee, Oregano Oil, fish oil, seaweed can also contribute to healthy dopamine production.

What If The Dopamine Levels Are High?

Too much dopamine levels can be harmful to you. It can lead to paranoia(feeling of being persecuted), withdrawal from social situations and can make you psychotic. They even lead to overly intense and unrealistic behaviours.

Dopamine restrains secretion of prolactin (a hormone) by the pituitary gland – which may lead to menstrual disorders and infertility. Excess dopamine levels may not restrain prolactin effectively. Usually, the average dopamine level ranges from 0 to 30 pg/mL.

Many addictive drugs like cocaine and methamphetamines trigger the release of dopamine from the neurons. This is one of the reasons most people who are addicted to drugs have a hard time quitting them. Therefore excess levels of dopamine can result in euphoria, aggression and intense sexual feelings. Along with them, excess dopamine causes mania, hallucinations, delusions.

What If The Dopamine Levels Falls Off?

Dopamine deficiency can lead to certain medical conditions, though they are not exactly found to be the cause of those conditions directly. Some vital brain functions also affected by low dopamine levels that may result in;

- Mood changes
- Sleeplessness
- Memory & learning problems
- Lack of concentration
- Less motivation and enthusiasm
- Reduced alertness
- Poor coordination
- Motor control altered in a person's body.

Parkinson's disease, psychosis, depression, Dopamine transporter deficiency syndrome are the medical conditions associated with low dopamine levels. However lower dopamine levels can make you sleepy, and lack of sleep may also lower your dopamine.

Conclusion:

Anything too much or too less is harmful to our health. Keep an eye on your 'happy hormone' for feel-good emotions triggered the hormone. Include the foods mentioned in the article in your daily diet. A healthy diet always provides a healthy life.