

## Calming Foods to Reduce Stress

But true comfort foods do exist:

\* Berries, any berries. Eat them one by one instead of M&Ms when the pressure's on. For those tough times when tension tightens your jaw, try rolling a frozen berry around in your mouth. First one, and then another, and another. Since the carbs in berries turn to sugar very slowly, you won't have a blood-sugar crash. The bonus: They're a good source of vitamin C, which helps fight a jump in cortisol, a stress hormone.

\* Guacamole. If you're craving something creamy, look no further. Avocados are loaded with B vitamins, which stress quickly depletes and which your body needs in order to maintain nerves and brain cells. Plus, their creaminess comes from healthy fat. Scoop up the stuff with whole-grain baked chips -- crunching keeps you from gritting your teeth.

\* Mixed nuts. Just an ounce will do. Walnuts help replace those stress-depleted B vitamins, Brazil nuts give you a whopping amount of zinc (which is also drained by high anxiety), and almonds boost your E, which helps fight cellular damage linked to chronic stress. Buy nuts in the shell and think of it as multitasking: With every squeeze of the nutcracker, you're releasing a little tension.

\* Oranges. People who take 1,000 milligrams of C before giving a speech have lower levels of cortisol and lower blood pressures than those who don't. So lean back, take a deep breath, and concentrate on peeling a large orange. The 5-minute mindfulness break will ease your mind, and you'll get a bunch of C as well.

\* Asparagus. Each tender stalk is a source of folic acid, a natural mood lightener. Dip the spears in fat-free yogurt or sour cream for a hit of calcium with each bite.

\* Chai tea. A warm drink is a super soother, and curling up with a cup of aromatic decaf chai tea (Tazo makes ready-to-brew bags) can make the whole evil day go away.

\* Dark chocolate. Okay, there's nothing in it that relieves stress, but when only chocolate will do, reach for the dark, sultry kind that's at least 70% cocoa. You figure if the antioxidant flavonoids in it are potent enough to fight cancer and heart disease, they've got to be able to temper tension's effects.

Source: [www.realage.com](http://www.realage.com)