

Red meat found to be a good mood food

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(Medical Xpress) -- Deakin University health researchers have found that eating less than the recommended amount of red meat is related to depression and anxiety in women.

Associate Professor Felice Jacka and colleagues from Deakin's Barwon Psychiatric Research Unit based at Barwon Health investigated the relationship between the consumption of beef and lamb and the presence of depressive and anxiety disorders in more than 1000 women from the Geelong region. The results are published in the current edition of the journal *Psychotherapy Psychosomatics*.

"We had originally thought that red meat might not be good for mental health, as studies from other countries had found red meat consumption to be associated with physical health risks, but it turns out that it actually may be quite important," Associate Professor Jacka said.

"When we looked at women consuming less than the recommended amount of red meat in our study, we found that they were twice as likely to have a diagnosed depressive or anxiety disorder as those consuming the recommended amount.

"Even when we took into account the overall healthiness of the women's diets, as well as other factors such as their socioeconomic status, physical activity levels, smoking, weight and age, the relationship between low red meat intake and mental health remained.

"Interestingly, there was no relationship between other forms of protein,

such as chicken, pork, fish or plant-based proteins, and mental health.

“Vegetarianism was not the explanation either. Only 19 women in the study were vegetarians, and the results were the same when they were excluded from the study analyses.”

Associate Professor Jacka said that it didn’t seem to be a good idea to eat too much red meat either.

“We found that regularly eating more than the recommended amount of red meat was also related to increased [depression](#) and [anxiety](#),” she said.

Given the results of this study, Associate Professor Jacka believes following the recommended weekly intake of red meat could boost our mental health.

“We already know that the overall quality of your diet is important to [mental health](#). But it seems that eating a moderate amount of lean red meat, which is roughly 3-4 small, palm-sized serves a week, may also be important,” she said.

Associate Professor Jacka also suggests sticking with grass fed meats whenever possible.

“We know that [red meat](#) in Australia is a healthy product as it contains high levels of nutrients, including the omega-3 fatty acids that are important to mental and physical health. This is because cattle and sheep in Australia are largely grass fed. In many other countries, the cattle are kept in feedlots and fed grains, rather than grass. This results in a much less healthy meat with more saturated fat and fewer healthy fats.”

Provided by Deakin University

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