

Iron and zinc found to be a mood booster for women

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Deakin University health researchers have found that increasing iron and zinc intakes can help boost a woman's mood and memory and may be a way to address cognitive decline in old age.

In a review published in *Nutrients*, the researchers with Deakin's School of Psychology and Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research (C-PAN) examined studies into the positive mood and cognitive effects of increasing iron and [zinc](#) intakes in [women](#) between 12 and 55 years old. . The researchers found that increasing iron intakes via supplements improved memory and intellectual ability, and increasing zinc intakes also via supplements improved [depressive symptoms](#) in women who either already had depression or had low zinc levels.

The important role iron and zinc play in mental health have lead the researchers to believe these nutrients might also be useful in addressing cognitive decline in old age.

"The results from this review study provide evidence of the importance of iron and zinc in maintaining both physical and psychological health and wellbeing in women," said the study's senior author Dr Linda Byrne.

"However there is still so much that we don't know in this field. There were very few studies looking at zinc on its own for example, and we do not have enough information to know if similar results can be seen through dietary change only. It is important to replicate the findings of improved cognitive and mood outcomes when iron levels are increased.

If this can successfully be done, it has important implications as a possible pathway for preventing or slowing [cognitive decline](#) in old age."

Iron deficiency is one of the most common nutrient deficiencies world-wide and women are at particular risk of not having enough iron stores as they regularly lose blood which contains iron, they experience pregnancy which increases iron needs and are less likely to consume diets rich in readily available iron compared with men. While it is estimated that between 10-20 per cent of adult women experience low [iron levels](#), less is known about women's zinc status.

A Deakin research team led by C-PAN's Associate Professor Lynn Riddell is currently investigating iron and zinc in Australian women. Through the WIZE study (Women, Iron, Zinc and Energy) the researchers are looking more closely at the relationship between women's iron and [zinc concentrations](#), their feelings of fatigue, depressive symptoms, mood and memory.

"Unfortunately we know very little about women's zinc status as it is a tricky nutrient to measure in the body," Associate Professor Riddell said.

"Through the WIZE study we hope to be able to get a picture of the relationship between iron and zinc status and mood, fatigue, depression and memory. We then aim to develop sustainable dietary and lifestyle advice to help women maintain their health and wellbeing through diets that support optimal [iron](#) and zinc nutrition."

More information: "Increasing Iron and Zinc in Pre-Menopausal Women and Its Effects on Mood and Cognition: A Systematic Review" *Nutrients* 2014, 6(11), 5117-5141; [DOI: 10.3390/nu6115117](https://doi.org/10.3390/nu6115117)

Provided by Deakin University

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