BBC LEARNING ENGLISH
6 Minute English
Food and mood

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Dan

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English – the show that brings you an interesting topic, authentic listening practice and six items of incredibly useful vocabulary. I'm Dan…

Neil

And I'm Neil. Now, a favourite topic today: food, and how food can influence your mood. Dan, tell me, what food makes you happy?

Dan

Oh, you know, ice cream, chocolate… chocolate always puts a smile on my face.

Neil

And a few inches round your waistline! Sadly, the research we'll be looking at today doesn't suggest you eat more chocolate… but it does talk about bacteria!

Dan

Bacteria – those simple, small organisms – they make me happy?

Neil

Absolutely, the so-called 'good' bacteria do! We'll get to that, but first we'll look at today's question. How many bacteria are there in the human body?

a) 39 million
b) 39 billion
c) 39 trillion

Dan

They are pretty small. I'm going to go for c) 39 trillion.

Neil

Well, we'll find out if you're right… by counting them one by one.

Dan
That's going to take longer than six minutes!

Neil
Yes it is, so let's get moving! Scientists believe your mental state is connected to the bacteria in your **gut**.

Dan
My **gut** - my stomach and the other organs my food passes through…

Neil
Yes. Researchers at McMaster University in Canada and University College Cork in Ireland have found that certain bacteria help reduce **anxiety** in mice…

Dan
Anxiety – the state of being worried or anxious. I don't like the sound of an anxious mouse.

Neil
Well I'm afraid there's another mouse experiment coming up. Researchers at Kyushu University found **germ**-free mice showed more stress…

Dan
Germs – a general word for bacteria and microorganisms, usually the ones which cause disease… So **germs** help reduce stress and anxiety in mice. Any research on humans?

Neil
The BBC TV programme Trust me, I'm a Doctor has just explored this. They looked at foods which are high in 'good' bacteria – a claim which more and more food products are making these days.

Dan
Yes, it's a phrase that appears a lot in marketing.

Neil
But many traditional foods are high in good bacteria as well. They found that homemade **fermented** food was best.

Dan
So things like miso soup, kimchi, yoghurt, sauerkraut – all these are **fermented**. Have you tried all of those?

Neil
I love miso soup and kimchi. And fermentation is the process where sugars in food are turned into acids and alcohol.

Dan
Fermented foods are full of lots of good bacteria for your **gut**… Anything else from the BBC programme?

Neil
Well, this is the man behind the BBC study, Dr Michael Mosley. In this clip, a radio presenter asks him about the best kind of food to make us happy.

INSERT
Dr Michael Mosley interviewed on BBC Radio 4
Presenter
What's the good mood food? What shall we eat now to cheer ourselves up?

Dr Michael Mosley
Mediterranean **diet**. Olive oil; oily fish, full of omega 3, which is really good for the brain; whole grains; lots of fruits and vegetables. Sugar: terrible for you.

Presenter
Not chocolate eclairs then?

Dr Michael Mosley
Sadly not. That will make you feel good for about 30 seconds until you finish it and then you feel terribly guilty.

Presenter
Right, ok. Mediterranean it is.

Dan
He said the best kind of food is the Mediterranean **diet**. Now, a **diet** can mean 'an eating plan designed to help you lose weight'.

Neil
But that's not what it means here. Here it refers to the food and drink eaten by a group of people – in this case, the people living around the Mediterranean Sea.

Dan
Lots of oily fish, olive oil, grains, fruits and vegetables. And of course, add in plenty of **fermented** food too.

Neil
And don't eat too many fatty, sugary, chocolaty things like chocolate eclairs – those are buns filled with cream and covered in chocolate. It's really **not rocket science**, is it?

Dan

Eating healthily is pretty straightforward, even if the science behind it is complex. When you say something is **not rocket science**, you mean 'it's not difficult to understand'.

Neil

Now, are you ready for some counting?

Dan

Ah yes, you wanted me to count all the bacteria in my body! I said 39 trillion.

Neil

And you were right. The number goes up and down, but on average we're thought to have around 39 trillion bacterial cells in the body, according to the Weizmann Institute in Israel. The interesting thing is they think that there are only 30 trillion human cells in the body.

Dan

So there's more bacteria than human in me?

Neil

Well, maybe just you, Dan! Now, before the bacteria take over completely, let's look over today's words one more time.

Dan

Gut was first. It means 'the stomach and other organs which digest our food'. But here's an extra tip - the word can also mean 'bravery' when used in the plural. You've got **guts**, Neil, wearing that crazy shirt in this office!

Neil

Why thank you. Maybe I don't feel any **anxiety** about how I look! **Anxiety** was our second word, and it means 'fear or worry'. The adjective is anxious.

Dan

You know what makes me anxious? **Germs**. I wash my hands fifty times a day. I can't stand the idea of getting ill from all the **germs** around here.

Neil

Yes, **germs** are tiny organisms, and usually refers to those which carry disease. But as we heard, certain **germs** are good for you!

Dan

Especially those which are in **fermented** food. That's food which has gone through a process where sugars turn into acids and alcohol. They often taste sour or bitter.

Neil

We also talk about **fermenting** alcoholic drinks. Beer and wine are **fermented**.

Dan
Does that mean I should make them a part of my **diet**? A **diet** not only means 'a healthy eating plan', but can also mean 'the foods and drinks consumed by an individual or group'. Which country has the best **diet**, Neil?

Neil
Well, in my opinion the Japanese **diet**. It's my favourite anyway – very varied and plenty of **fermented** food!

Dan
And finally we had – **it's not rocket science** – it's simple to understand. An example?

Neil
Brewing beer **isn't rocket science** – you just need hops, yeast and patience.

Dan
And there we are – a rocket speed review of today's words! And that's the end of today's 6 Minute English. Please join us again soon.

Neil
And we are on social media too. Make sure to visit us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Both
Bye!