



HOW DIET, CAFFEINE, AND ALCOHOL AFFECT MIXED-STATE IRRITABILITY FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING MIXED FEATURES OR MIXED-STATE MOOD SYMPTOMS

The Short Version

Food, caffeine, and alcohol can nudge moods up or down.

Stable blood sugar, steady sleep, and good hydration usually mean fewer spikes in irritability.

During mixed states, most people do better with less caffeine and no alcohol.

Food and mood: what helps

Aim for steady fuel.

- Build meals with protein, fiber, and healthy fats. Think eggs or tofu, beans, chicken, fish, Greek yogurt, nuts, seeds, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.
- Eat regularly. Skipping meals can cause blood sugar dips that feel like sudden irritability.

Ease up on added sugar and large portions of low-fiber carbs.

- Sweet drinks, candies, pastries, and big servings of white bread, rice, or pasta, especially without protein, fiber, or fat, may cause energy dips for some people that feel like irritability or mood whiplash.
- Try swaps: sparkling water, fruit, whole-grain options, smaller portions.

If taking an MAOI antidepressant.

- Some foods high in **tyramine** can raise blood pressure with these medicines. Common examples are aged cheeses and cured or fermented meats.
- If unsure whether a medicine is an MAOI, ask the prescriber or pharmacist before making diet changes.

Caffeine: why less is usually better during mixed states

Caffeine can increase jitters, speed up thoughts, and make sleep lighter or shorter. All of these can raise irritability when moods are already mixed.

One possible step-down plan:

- Cut total caffeine by about 25 percent every 3 to 4 days to lower the chance of headaches or rebound fatigue.
- Stop caffeine by early afternoon to protect sleep.
- Swap in half-caf, decaf, herbal tea, or sparkling water.
- Watch energy drinks. Serving sizes and caffeine content vary widely.

Signs it is too much right now: shakiness, a “wired but tired” feeling, heart racing, more snapping at people, trouble falling or staying asleep.

Alcohol: why "just a little" often backfires

Alcohol can look calming at first, then trigger faster mood swings, worse sleep, and more irritability later. It can also interact with medicines.

Safer choice during mixed states: avoid alcohol for now.

If choosing to drink, set a hard limit before the first sip, do not mix with energy drinks, hydrate between drinks, and avoid drinking close to bedtime.





Some over-the-counter products can worsen mixed-state symptoms or interact with medicines. Some have been reported in case reports or clinical literature to trigger irritability, hypomania, or mania in certain people.

Bottom line: Always check with the prescribing clinician or pharmacist before starting any supplement or herb.

A two-week reset Plan

1. **Meals on a rhythm.** Three meals and one to two snacks at regular times.
2. **Caffeine step-down.** Reduce by about a quarter every few days; stop by early afternoon.
3. **No alcohol.** Reassess once moods are steadier.
4. **Hydration goal.** Sip water through the day; add an electrolyte drink if sweating or if advised by the care team.
5. **Sleep protectors.** Consistent bedtime and wake time, dark cool room, no large meals or screens right before bed.
6. **Track what helps.** Note irritability level, sleep hours, caffeine, alcohol, and meals. Bring the notes to the next visit.



When to reach out

1. Irritability climbs to a 7–10 out of 10, or feels unsafe.
2. Sleep drops below 5 to 6 hours for two nights in a row.
3. New or worsening racing thoughts, impulsive behavior, or agitation.
4. Headaches, chest pounding, or unusual blood pressure readings, especially if taking an MAOI.
5. Any concern about interactions, supplements, or big diet shifts.

Emergency: If there is risk of harm, call local emergency services at 911.

For mental health crises in the Philippines, call 1553 from a landline, or 0919-057-1553 (Smart/TNT) / 0917-899-8727 (Globe/TM) from mobile (NCMH Crisis Hotline, available 24/7).

Gentle reminder

Nutrition and lifestyle are not cures, but they often make medical treatment work better. Small, steady changes are enough. Bring questions and trackers to appointments so the team can tailor a plan that fits the person's life and culture.