

Happy little yeastie might

EXCLUSIVE
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IT turns out there may be some truth behind the happy little Vegemite jingle.

New research has found that people who eat yeast-based spreads report being less anxious and stressed than those who abstain.

Lead researcher Professor Vasso Apostolopoulos, from Victoria University, said a deficiency in vitamin B - one of the main vitamins contained in

the sour spreads— was associated with a range of conditions, including depression, but she was keen to investigate to see if supplementing it in the diet could improve symptoms.

“While there have been many jingles over the years, there isn’t any scientific evidence to back it up, which is something we were interested in establishing,” Prof Apostolopoulos said.

More than 500 people in Australia, UK and New Zealand were surveyed online.

They were asked if they ate yeast-based spreads, which ones, how often and those who

did consume them had their moods monitored using a validated psychological tool.

“We found people that ate yeast-based spreads had lower levels of anxiety and stress

compared to those who ate none,” she said.

The products analysed in the research had a different variety of B vitamins, ranging from B1 to B12.

“Those who ate spreads that contained B12, which includes Marmite and the new Vegemite with the orange lid, were even less stressed and anxious than those who ate the other brands.”

Accredited Practising Dietitian Margaret Hays said while the results were positive and

interesting, they did not show the yeast spreads caused improvements in mental health.

“It may be that something else that is going in those people’s lives that they studied, they might be having a healthier diet overall, or be from a higher socio-economic background or be doing more exercise, they are so many things that you can’t control for,” Ms Hays said.

Vitamin Bs can be derived from eating a range of healthy unprocessed foods, including

meat, chicken, fish, dairy products, nuts and some fruit and vegetables. Professor Apostolopoulos said spreads were not replacements for medical treatment for depression and mood disorders.

“We would like to investigate further and carry out randomised control trials to see if it can improve depression and anxiety in people,” she said.

None of the makers of the products were involved in the funding or carrying out of the research.

