

Come on, get Happy!

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Depression will affect close to 10 percent of the population this year. The good news is it's naturally treatable. Here's how.

Are you or a loved one experiencing the blues? Well, you're not alone. Although depression is twice as prevalent in women, it can happen to anyone. Depression is not a disease and is often misunderstood, but the good news is that it is treatable. While some people prefer antidepressants, others find natural therapies to be equally effective.

Natural options for alleviating depression range from nutrition and acupuncture to regular counselling sessions. Before deciding which plan is best for you, consider addressing the primary trigger of your depression. Once you know what's making you feel down, it will be easier to start feeling better.

Are you SAD?

Most of us tend to feel blue when winter rolls around; and rightly so — it's grey, dull, and cold outside. However, sometimes the winter blues go beyond simply not feeling like yourself a few days. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that affects a person during the same season each year. Luckily, this is naturally treatable with light therapy (which was shown to improve mood within the first week of use).

There are two primary types of light therapy: light box and dawn stimulation. Light box therapy involves sitting in front of a "light box" for half an hour or longer each day, usually in the morning.

Dawn stimulation involves simulating the sun — a dim light goes off in the morning while you sleep and eventually, you let it get brighter over time.

Diet Dilemmas

Food can have a huge impact on mood. When your body is not well nourished, blood glucose levels drop, which can lead to fatigue, irritability, and poor concentration. To keep your energy up, eat five or six mini meals throughout the day. Each meal should be packed with good quality fats, proteins, and carbohydrates.

One factor that is often overlooked in depression is food allergies. Symptoms can manifest themselves in migraine headaches, mood changes, and depression. Most commonly, these will arise from allergies to wheat, gluten, and dairy.

However, it is often difficult to make the association since symptoms can appear several days after eating an offending food. An elimination diet or food allergy testing would be helpful in determining food triggers.

Life Changes

Going through menopause can make your emotions spiral out of control. Having a positive attitude is key. Instead of looking at it as the end of one life, think of it as a new beginning. Go out of your comfort zone and try a totally new activity.



Consider salsa dancing, yoga, or even tai chi. It's also important to employ healthy lifestyle habits such as a clean diet, exercise, and stress management techniques.

Emotional Healing

While stress is part of our daily lives, the way we approach and deal with it can impact our emotions. Without coping mechanisms and stress management techniques — which include deep breathing, yoga, and meditation — stress can lead to distress, disturbing the body's internal balance. This leads to a host of physical symptoms such as headaches, an upset stomach, elevated blood pressure, and problems sleeping.

If you or someone you know are suffering from depression, consult a health care provider. Don't worry about being shy — tell him or her about the whole picture. Do let your health care provider know about the supplements, medication, and foods you eat and any alternative treatments you've undergone.

Natural Ways to Alleviate Depression

Food/Supplement	What it is	More details
Tryptophan-rich foods	An amino acid that the brain converts into serotonin, a feel-good chemical that is often low in those suffering from depression.	Foods that are rich in tryptophan include: turkey, chicken, fish, bananas, wheat germ, eggs, avocado, milk and nuts. (Refrain from any foods that you are sensitive or allergic to.)
Vitamin B complex (100mg daily)	Helps with energy production and supporting the nervous system.	Try not to take B vitamins past lunchtime as they can interfere with sleep.
Lavender Oil	An essential oil that is helpful for reducing stress and enhancing sleep.	Add a few drops to your bath or mix with water and spray on your pillow. Remember not to ingest the oil or rub directly on the skin.
St. John's wort	Helps to elevate the biochemicals in the brain that affect mood –namely dopamine and serotonin – and reduces adrenal activity, which is increased in depression.	It can have many side effects including photosensitivity, dry mouth, stomach irritation and dizziness. Take under the advice of a qualified health care practitioner, especially if you're already on anti-depressants or any prescription medications. ♣

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