

Beating the Winter Blues – Dealing With Seasonal Affective Disorder Naturally

Seasonal affective disorder, also called the winter blues or SAD, is a type of depression that typically occurs during the fall and winter seasons when days get shorter. The main cause is lack of exposure to sunlight.

This type of depression is more prevalent in latitudes that are farther away from the Equator. Women are three times more likely than men to suffer from it. Stress, of course, can aggravate it and lead to a worsening of symptoms.

When people have less exposure to sunlight, their bodies produce less Vitamin D. Vitamin D is technically a hormone that can only be produced when we are exposed to sunlight. When we do not produce enough vitamin D, our bodies can experience a serious deficiency, which can cause numerous health issues. Vitamin D deficiency has been linked to osteoporosis, diabetes, cancer, and depression. During the winter months, low levels of vitamin D can cause seasonal affective disorder. Thankfully, this is easily treatable.

How To Treat Seasonal Affective Disorder

Treatment of seasonal affective disorder is relatively easy and cheap through exercise, light therapy, and diet.

Exercise

Regular exercise can raise serotonin levels in the brain, helping to alleviate one of the symptoms of seasonal affective disorder. Go for a brisk walk, lift weights at the gym, do

yoga, or find some exercise that you enjoy. Feeling miserable by doing some exercise you don't enjoy will defeat the purpose. Of course, if you can exercise outside, you get the double benefit of exposure to the sun, which helps your body produce more vitamin D. This in turn helps to alleviate your symptoms of depression.

Light Therapy

Light therapy can help the body produce more vitamin D, the cause behind SAD. Spending time outside as much as possible, even on a cloudy day, can help the body produce more vitamin D. If that's not feasible, special light boxes that produce UVB light can be purchased. These function similarly to sunlight in helping the body produce vitamin D. Caution should be practiced when using them to not stare directly into the light, just as you wouldn't stare directly at the sun.

Foods That Fight SAD

Of course, eating a diet high in fresh, raw produce is ideal. It is harder to get a variety of fresh produce during the winter months, but not impossible. There are a number of fruits and vegetables in season during the colder months of the year. Kale, cabbage, collard greens, winter peas, and root vegetables are just a few of the vegetables you will find in season. Fruits in season include cranberries, pomegranates, and apples.

In addition to a diet high in raw produce, there are certain foods that can help alleviate the symptoms of SAD including foods high in antioxidants (specifically anthocyanidin), tryptophan, and omega-3 fatty acids. Dark chocolate, high in cocoa, and bananas, high in tryptophan, can help the body produce dopamine and serotonin. Avocados are high in oleic acid while fatty fish and flaxseed oil are high in omega-3 fatty acids. These two types of fatty acids help the brain by lowering inflammation, which in turn aids in the production of

dopamine and serotonin.

Conclusion

You do not need to suffer through winter blues every year. Exercise, light therapy, and diet are the primary methods of treatment. Even aromatherapy can help lift your mood when fighting SAD. If you find that your levels of vitamin D and other vitamins and minerals essential to mental health are severely low and that diet and exercise alone are not fixing things, there are supplements that can help alleviate seasonal affective disorder. Vitamin D and B vitamins can help.

Recommended Reading:

- *How Candida Leads to Depression, Anxiety, ADHD, and Other Mental Disorders*
- *The Power of Our Hormones and How To Balance Them*
- *Natural Remedies for Chronic Stress*
- *Insomnia – A Comprehensive Look with Natural Remedies*
- *How I Overcame Depression Naturally*
- *Mental Health, Physical Health & B Vitamins – Nature’s Valium*
- *How Candida Leads to Depression, Anxiety, ADHD, and Other Mental Disorders*

Sources:

- *What is Seasonal Affective Disorder? – Dr. Normal E. Rosenthal*
- *Sunlight and Vitamin D – Organic Lifestyle Magazine*
- *Vitamin D Deficiency and Depression – Psychology Today*
- *Five Foods That Fight Depression – Organic Lifestyle Magazine*
- *Treating Depression with Omega-3: Encouraging Results from Largest Clinical Study – Science Daily*
- *Healthy Fats the Healthy Way – Organic Lifestyle Magazine*