Five Ways To Reduce Depression and Improve Your Mental State

When the body is healthy, the brain is healthy. If the brain is impaired it’s pretty difficult to enjoy life. Do not underestimate how your health affects your mind!

For those suffering from depression, there’s situational depression and there’s chronic depression. Situational depression is generally triggered by a traumatic incident like losing a loved one or being unable to find work. Chronic depression often starts with situational depression, but it can also just seem to come out of nowhere. Either way, eliminating depression is much harder and often impossible without a healthy brain. For many who do not address health, the best they can hope for is situational happiness, where sadness or anxiety is the norm and outside influences are needed to trigger positive feelings. Addiction is common for such people.

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Eat Right: Healthy Gut = Healthy Brain

A healthy gut is necessary to break down food, assimilate nutrients, balance hormones, and supply beneficial microflora throughout the body that keeps pathogenic activity from proliferating. An unhealthy gut prohibits proper nutrient assimilation, causes hormonal imbalances, and leaks unhealthy, infectious microbes and undigested food into the body. Pathogens, undigested food particles, hormonal imbalance, and a lack of proper nutrition balance all lead to inflammation.

If the body is inflamed, the brain is inflamed. Studies have shown that people with depression have higher levels of inflammatory markers compared to people who are not depressed. Chronically higher levels of inflammation due to medical illnesses are also associated with higher rates of depression.

Poor diet hurts brain function in other ways too. The refined sugars found in most processed foods spike insulin and trigger the release of inflammatory cytokines. Pesticides, herbicides, artificial colors and flavors, and other chemicals cause problems in many different ways as well. Each and every toxic ingredient harms our health in multiple ways, which is the nature of toxins. But, gut health usually is the best indicator of overall health.

You can inhibit some of the effects of depression with drugs, for a while, but to truly be well one must heal the gut. Healing the gut requires lots of raw vegetables and herbs along with the elimination of pharmaceuticals and other drugs, as well as refined and processed foods. For more on that check out *How To Heal Your Gut*.

Related: *Sugar Leads To Depression*

Foods That Fight Depression

This is where articles typically go over the benefits of salmon, fresh whole fruits and vegetables, leafy grains, nuts, chocolate, oysters, etc. Readers are expected to pick out a few of their favorite foods that made the list and starting eating more of those foods in a futile attempt to feel better about their lives.

It doesn’t work that way.

Salads are the best thing anyone can eat to heal the gut and the entire body (except for those rare exceptions when someone suffers from things like histamine intolerance, but still, the goal for anyone healing from chronic disease should be to get on daily salads, even if one cannot start off that way). We’re not just talking about lettuce and carrot shreds. Salads should have at least ten vegetables and a few herbs. This article has a recipe for the kind of salads we’re talking about. Other than that, focus on whole foods and diversity. And don’t let corporations make your food for you.

In a nutshell, eat salads, eat whole foods, avoid processed and refined foods, make your own food.

Related: *Stop Eating Like That and Start Eating Like This – Your Guide to Homeostasis Through Diet*

Squats and Other Exercises

We were meant to squat. And the great thing about squats is you can do them almost anywhere. In nature we squatted to hide, to defecate, to pick things up, and we squatted instead of sitting. In paleo times, if you couldn’t squat you probably wouldn’t be around much longer.

Squatting helps massage and activate organ and glandular function, releases positive hormones, aligns the spine, and

helps to get the lymphatic system moving. If you can't squat, try assisted squats to work on the range of motion, and try "get-ups", which are done by laying on the ground and getting up. Alternate sides and alternate legs being used each time.

Other exercises that are good for alleviating depression include:

- Running: We are also meant to run. The human body should be squatting and running every day. Studies show that aerobic exercise is often as effective as anti-depressants for treating depression. And if you manage to achieve that "runner's high" you'll want it again and again.
- Hiking In the Woods: Getting outdoors and in nature for some time has also been shown in studies to match or exceed anti-depressants for treating depression. While you're out there, do some earthing.
- Yoga: Studies also show yoga can alleviate depression. We can't recommend Yoga with Adriene enough.
- Resistance Training: Weightlifting and other forms of resistance training have much less research regarding the benefits for depression, but the little bit of research that has been done looks promising. And anyone who can put more than their body weight on their back to squat can attest to how amazing it feels.
- HITT: If you want to squeeze the most out of the least amount of time, you can't beat high-intensity interval training. Try it once and you'll know why it's a good routine for alleviating depression.

Related: *Running Without Knee Pain*

Breathe

Most of us are rapid, shallow breathers. We raise our shoulders, pull in our diaphragm, and take a breath that fills only the top portion of our lungs.

When you breathe properly, your diaphragm, your stomach, and your ribcage expand, not the pectoral area. Fully exhaling is important, too. Remember, you are breathing in oxygen-rich air and releasing carbon dioxide and toxins.

Proper breathing dramatically increases stamina and mental clarity, elevates your mood, and helps the body detoxify more efficiently (more toxins are released through breathing than through the pores, urination, and defecation combined).

Supplements For Depression

If you're looking at supplements to replace a healthy diet, that's going to work only a little better than skipping exercise for a protein shake. Supplements can certainly help improve symptoms but without the right diet, true health cannot be achieved.

That said, chronic depression indicates a deficiency in the body and pathogenic activity. Most people who suffer from chronic depression also suffer from an abundance of Candida. In fact, most people who suffer from chronic anything have too much Candida. For anything regarding yeast, mold, or fungi, we recommend SF722, second only to a healthy diet with lots of salad. For more on that, see *How Candida Leads to Depression*.

Probiotics

As stated earlier, healthy gut microbiome is imperative to brain health. Our symbiotic bacteria play a key role in nutrient assimilation, hormone production, immune system functionality, and science has just discovered that our gut bacteria also resides in our brain!

Probiotics can help bring the gut into homeostasis and can help keep pathogenic microbes from flourishing. Probiotics are anti-inflammatory, and some studies have indicated that probiotics may alleviate depression. Be careful though. Don't

just pick up any cheap probiotic and expect good results. A high-quality probiotic along with a prebiotic diet (raw vegetables) can help build a healthy gut biome, while a cheap probiotic can actually feed pathogens and do more harm than good.

Fatty Acids

Our brain is 60% fat. Our brain, gut, and whole body need a variety of fats to function properly. We need saturated fats, monounsaturated fats (omega 9s), and polyunsaturated fats (omega 6s, 3s). A typical western diet is heavy in trans fats and rancid fats which cause inflammation. Some people don't get enough fats and most people get too many of the wrong types of fats.

A large Norwegian study showed that people who regularly consumed cod liver oil were about 30% less likely to show signs of depression. The longer the participants took cod liver oil, the less likely they were to have high levels of depression. In another study with 49 patients who had a history of harming themselves, study subjects were randomly assigned to receive either 1200 mg EPA and 900 mg DHA, or a placebo. Both groups also received counseling. The study lasted 12 weeks. In the end, the group receiving the fat supplementation improved significantly more than the placebo group.

Many other studies have shown promise in treating depression and anxiety and other mental health disorders with beneficial fat supplementation. It's best to get your healthy fats through a healthy diet but supplementation can help speed up healing and have an almost immediate reduction in inflammation and brain health.

Tryptophan (5-HTP and L-tryptophan)

Tryptophan is an essential amino acid because it can't be

produced by our body. We need it for anabolic processes and the production of various hormones, including serotonin, and the liver can synthesize niacin from tryptophan. So there’s a lot of competition for tryptophan. For those who are low in serotonin, supplementation may help (but low serotonin levels are an indication of poor gut health). Several studies have shown that low tryptophan levels can lead to a depressive state and cause anxiety.

5-HTP is generally recommended over l-tryptophan because it crosses the blood-brain barrier and gets converted into serotonin more efficiently than l-tryptophan. Studies have shown greater results in alleviating depression with 5-HTP supplementation.

Selenium

A study looked at selenium and depression with a total of 978 young adults aged 17 to 25. Participants filled out a questionnaire to track their mood daily for two weeks to determine their levels of depression. Blood tests were done to determine their selenium levels. The results showed that when selenium levels are too low or too high depressive symptoms were much more likely. The study also showed that lower concentrations of selenium were found to be more detrimental than higher levels.

Vitamin D

Many studies have shown a link between vitamin D deficiency and depression. People with low vitamin D were at a much greater risk of depression. We recommend daily access to sunlight. For those with whom it’s not possible to get enough sunlight, and for those who are overweight, vitamin D supplementation makes sense.

B Vitamin Complex

According to some experts, one of the common causes of chronic depression is a lack of or imbalance of B vitamins. Vitamins B3, B6, B9, and B12 are all known to be imperative for proper brain health and hormone production. Taking just one B vitamin for a long period of time can cause an imbalance that can be more detrimental to health than being low in most or all Bs. Poor B vitamin assimilation is a sign of poor gut health.

Ashwagandha

Laboratory rats were administered imipramine (a common anti-depressant medication) or ashwagandha. The results were almost identical. In another study, ashwagandha was also found to work as well as diazepam with depression and anxiety caused by social isolation. Ashwagandha is an effective anti-depressant without the serious side effects that medication comes with.

Eleuthero

Eleuthero has a mild sedative effect and supports the adrenals and inhibits stress hormones. While this herb can be a godsend to some, it also can be overstimulating and is contraindicated in some people, especially those with very high blood pressure.

Holy Basil

Holy basil is well known for its ability to reduce inflammation, stress, and anxiety and it can help manage depression. Research has shown that holy basil decreases the amount of cortisol released during stressful events.

Maca Root

Maca root has been shown to help reduce depression and anxiety. A study compared postmenopausal women who took maca

root versus those who took a placebo. The study revealed a significant reduction in anxiety, depression, and sexual dysfunction after Maca consumption.

St. John's Wort

Dubbed "nature's antidepressant," St. John's wort is a very popular alternative to antidepressant medication for those dealing with depression. Multiple studies have shown that this herb can be as effective as medication for mild to moderate depression. It could likely help with severe depression as well but there have not been enough studies done on this yet.

Conclusion

No medications will work to treat chronic depression forever, and the same is true for supplements. There are also many different nutrient deficiencies that can lead to depression. Taking one or two supplements may help for a little while, but the root cause will not be addressed without lifestyle changes. If you suffer from depression, stop letting corporations make your food for you, heal your gut, get outside, and put in the hard work to get well. I know that's easier said than done. I've been there. I'm prone to depression and I've had some catastrophic loses in my life. I recommend baby steps. And for me, personally, I found the products below to be most helpful. But again, gut health is paramount! Be sure to check out *How To Heal Your Gut*.

Recommended Products

- Shillington's Brain Tonic
- Shillington's Nerve Sedative Formula
- St. Johns Wort Capsules – Gaia Herbs
- Ultimate Omega-D3 Sport – Nordic Naturals
- Stress B-Complex – Thorne Research