

A Naturopathic Approach to Beating the Winter Blahs

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In addressing the 'blahs' we need to consider the many potential factors involved, including the physiological and biochemical necessities that contribute to a sense of well being, and make a thoughtful evaluation about what may be at the root of the problem. Circumstances, unresolved emotional issues, nutritional deficiencies, hypoglycemia, adrenal exhaustion, hypothyroidism, food allergies, mercury toxicity, yeast overgrowth, sex hormone deficiency, chronic pain, low light levels and fatigue are some causes of depression.

The most common type of conventional medication prescribed for depression are SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) which interfere with the breakdown of serotonin leaving it available to your nerves longer. Celexa, Zoloft, Paxil, Prozac, and Effexor are all SSRIs. Even though they act in the same way, they have varying reactions among individuals. Scientists are far from fully understanding the mysteries of brain chemistry. These drugs work for some but not for others, and they have numerous possible side effects. There is concern about their effect on the brain in long term use.

Serotonin production in the brain requires the amino acid tryptophan and vitamin B6. If you are deficient in either one of these nutrients serotonin production suffers along with many other body mechanisms. Considering that approximately of 75% of North Americans are B6 deficient, according to RDI (recommended daily intake), it would seem like a reasonable place to start don't you think?! The current RDI is 2.6mg of B6, extremely outdated, and based on old minimums to prevent severe diseases. Most adults can easily benefit from at least 50mg of B6 per day. Vitamin B6 should not be supplemented on its own but in the form of, or in conjunction with a B compound such as **Trophic B Compound 55mg**, or a multi high in Bs such as **Trophic Complete Multiple Supplement**. Vitamin D deficiency may be associated with SAD and the new recommended daily intake is 2000 i.u per day. Tryptophan is found in protein sources such as dairy, turkey, eggs, and oats. People who eat these foods regularly usually get enough. However, if you are deficient in Vitamin B3 your body may have to use your tryptophan to produce B3 with the help of B6. **Tryffonia (5-HTP)** 50-100mg is a source of 5-hydroxytryptophan which is made from tryptophan and the immediate precursor to serotonin synthesis. It is a way of ensuring tryptophan gets to be used for serotonin needs. When taken in the evening it also has the ability to support melatonin synthesis needed for sleep, as melatonin is broken down from serotonin when light levels decrease. Unlike SSRIs there is no concern about side effects when used as recommended. However, it should only be taken with other medications with professional guidance.

Omega 3 fatty acids, or more specifically EPA found in fish body oil, (and to a lesser degree in converted flax oil) has proven to be very effective in treating depression because of its involvement in the myelin sheath (the fatty coating around the nerves), which ensures speedy conduction of nerve impulses. If you do not consume wild salmon, sardines, herring, halibut, and or mackerel 4x/week, I suggest **TrophicFish Oil Concentrate** 1 tsp/day or **O3mega** extra strength 1-2 capsules per day with meals.

St.John's wort is well established as a treatment for depression and/or anxiety, but also should not be taken in conjunction with other antidepressants without professional guidance. I recommend **Flora St.John's wort oil capsules** or **Eclectic Institute's fresh freeze-dried St.John's Wort** 1-2 capsules 1-2x/day, as they both contain a concentration of the full spectrum of plant chemicals, and it is still uncertain which of the ingredients, or if it is synergy between multiple ingredients that has the anti-depressive action.

Full spectrum light bulbs, which mimic natural light, used for ½ hour per day during the winter months can be helpful for SAD (seasonal affective disorder).