

In any given year, nearly 20 million adults in the United States have depression. Most people with depression do not seek treatment, although the majority can be helped with treatment. The first step is to talk with your doctor, because depression is a serious illness that shouldn't be self-treated.

Depression can also be a symptom of another condition, such as hypothyroidism or anemia. If you are currently taking medication or undergoing other treatment for depression, do not stop without consulting your doctor.

## **Natural Depression Remedies**

Here are nine natural and herbal remedies that are used for depression.

### **1) St. John's Wort** : *comes first in pretty much every search*

The herb St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) has long been used in folk medicine for sadness, worry, nervousness, and poor sleep.

Today, the results of over 20 clinical trials suggest that St. John's wort works better than a placebo and is as effective as antidepressants for mild to moderate depression, with fewer side effects.

Studies suggest that St. John's wort is not effective for major depression.

It's available at health food stores, drug stores, and online in the form of capsules, tablets, liquid extracts, or tea.

St. John's wort may take 4 to 6 weeks to notice the full effects. Side effects may include dizziness, dry mouth, indigestion, and fatigue. St. John's wort increases photosensitivity, so extra caution should be taken to protect skin and eyes from sunlight.

Although St. John's wort appears to be reasonably safe when taken alone, it can interfere with the effectiveness of prescription and over-the-counter drugs, such as antidepressants, drugs to treat HIV infections and AIDs, drugs to prevent organ rejection for transplant patients, and oral contraceptives.

St. John's wort is not recommended for pregnant or nursing women, children, or people with bipolar disorder, liver or kidney disease. For more information, read my article on [St. John's wort](#)<sup>1</sup>.

## 2) Omega-3 fatty acids

[Omega-3 fatty acids](#)<sup>2</sup> are a type of good fat needed for normal brain function. Our bodies can't make omega-3s on their own, so we must obtain them through our diet.

Studies have linked depression with low dietary intake of omega-3 fatty acids. In countries with higher fish consumption, such as Japan and Taiwan, the depression rate is 10 times lower than in North American. Postpartum depression is also less common.

Studies suggest that omega-3's together with antidepressants may be more effective than antidepressants alone.

Cold water fish such as salmon, sardines, and anchovies are the richest food source of omega-3 fatty acids. But instead of eating more fish which contain mercury, PCBs, and other chemicals, fish oil capsules are considered a cleaner source of omega-3 fatty acids. Many companies filter their fish oil so that these chemicals are removed.

Fish oil capsules are sold in health food stores, drug stores, and online. Most brands should be stored in the fridge to prevent the oil from going rancid. When comparing brands, the key active components for depression are EPA and DHA.

Fish oil capsules may interact with blood-thinning drugs such as warfarin and aspirin. Side effects may include indigestion and bleeding. Fish oil should not be taken 2 weeks before or after surgery. Fish oil can also cause a fishy aftertaste. To prevent this, try taking the fish oil just before meals.

For more information, read my article on [fish oil and depression](#)<sup>3</sup>.

## 3) SAM-e : *highly recommended by a friend of mine*

SAM-e, pronounced "sammy", is short for S-adenosyl-L-methionine. It's a chemical that's found naturally in the human body and is believed to increase levels of neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine.

Several studies have found SAM-e is more effective than placebo.

In North America, SAM-e is available as an over-the-counter supplement in health food stores, drug stores, and online. It should be enteric-coated for maximum absorption. Although it's one of the more expensive supplements, it remains popular as a remedy for depression and osteoarthritis.

Side effects can include nausea and constipation. For more information, read [SAM-e and Depression](#)<sup>4</sup>.

#### **4) Folic Acid**

Folic acid, also called folate, is a B vitamin that is often deficient in people who are depressed.

Folate is found in green leafy vegetables, other vegetables, fruit, beans, and fortified grains. It's one of the most common vitamin deficiencies because of poor diet but also because chronic conditions and various medications such as aspirin and birth control pills can also lead to deficiency.

Besides food, folic acid is also available as a supplement or as part of a B-complex vitamin.

Researchers at Harvard University have found that depressed people with low folate levels don't respond as well to antidepressants, and taking folic acid in supplement form can improve the effectiveness of antidepressants. For more information, read [Low Folate and Vitamin B12 Linked to Depression](#)<sup>5</sup>.

#### **5) 5-HTP**

5-HTP is short for 5-hydroxytryptophan. It's produced naturally in the body and is used to make the neurotransmitter serotonin. Although taking 5-HTP in supplement form may theoretically boost the body's serotonin levels, many experts feel there is not enough evidence to determine the safety of 5-HTP. It should not be combined with antidepressants.

#### **6) Diet**

##### **Reduce your intake of sweets**

Sweets temporarily make you feel good as blood sugar levels soar, but may worsen mood later on when they plummet.

##### **Avoid caffeine and alcohol**

Caffeine and alcohol both dampen mood. Alcohol temporarily relaxes us and caffeine boosts energy, but the effects of both are short-lived. Both can worsen mood swings, anxiety, depression, and insomnia.

## **Vitamin B6**

Vitamin B6 is needed to produce the mood-enhancing neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine. Although deficiency of vitamin B6 is rare, a borderline deficiency may occur in people taking oral contraceptives, hormone replacement therapy, and drugs for tuberculosis.

## **Magnesium, Calcium**

Most people do not get enough magnesium in their diets. Good sources of magnesium are legumes, nuts, whole grains and green vegetables. Like vitamin B6, magnesium is needed for serotonin production. Stress depletes magnesium.

## **7) Exercise**

Regular exercise is one of the most effective and inexpensive ways to improve mood.

Exercise, particularly aerobic exercise, releases mood-elevating chemicals in the brain and can decrease stress hormones.

One of the best options to bust the blues is taking a brisk walk outside each morning for at least 30 minutes five days a week.

But what's important is that you choose something you enjoy and will stick with, whether it's going to the gym, signing up for dance classes, playing tennis, or gardening.

## **8) Light Therapy - Vitamin D**

Getting enough sunlight has been shown to be effective for seasonal mood changes that happen in the darker winter months.

Exposure to light in the morning helps the body's sleep/wake cycle work properly. Production of serotonin, a brain chemical that key in influencing our mood, is turned on in the morning upon exposure to light. During the winter when there is less sunlight, serotonin levels can drop, making us feel tired and prone to seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

One of the most simple ways to increase your exposure to light is to walk outdoors in the morning. Just be sure to use sunscreen to protect your skin from ultraviolet light.

Another option is to use special lights that simulate natural daylight.

Studies have found they are effective.

These lights can be found online. There are different types available, from light boxes to visors, that are typically used for 20-30 minutes a day. Look for lights with a minimum of 3,000 lux. many experts suggest 10,000 lux.

Although they are rather expensive ranging from \$150 to \$500, they may be covered by insurance.

<http://altmedicine.about.com/od/healthconditionsatod/a/Depression1.htm>

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## **L-TYROSINE**

Recommended by our landlady, who has plenty of experience with Depression active and passive. A natural substance that does basically the same trick as a chemical anti-depressant.

## **MATÉ**, Green Mate Tea, Yerba Mate

My favourite daytime drink. Keeps my mood in balance, doesn't make me jumpy (does it to my wife though) tastes wonderful with a little honey.

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**2. Schisandra-** "Chinese Prozac" is the perfect herb for [depressed](#) people that are stressed out. The berries of *Schisandra chinensis* improve mood, break up anxiety, support the adrenal glands through their "adaptogen" properties, enhance libido, and aid the liver's detoxification.

I would say if you are a stressed out stay at home mom with a low libido and feeling frazzled then this herb is most likely created just for you! Standard capsule dose is two 500mg capsules taken twice daily. Take in the morning and at lunch. Because of the adaptogen properties, do not take this herb in the evening as we want it to support the adrenal glands when they are the most active. Adrenal gland support is imperative for people "running on empty" and under chronic stress, as the adrenal glands create the "fight or flight" response in the form of cortisol and catecholamines that eventually become burnt out and dysfunctional from

chronic stress.

**3. Passionflower-** I have yet to meet a [depressed](#) person that does not have some degree of [anxiety](#), so I am including this gentle nervine relaxant herb on my list so that if you are depressed because you are [anxious](#), you can use *Passiflora incarnata* to help calm down a bit. From my observations anxiety typically feeds depression forward.

Watch your [depression](#) patterns, and if you tend to get REALLY stressed out, and then just crash and burn in to a depressive state, an herb like passionflower might help you more than an anti-depressant herb, or both can also simply be used. Implementing stress management tools are key, such as "[Square Breathing](#)" or "[Five Minutes to Zen](#)". Passion flower extract at 45 drops daily (tincture) was shown to be as effective as oxazepam (similar to valium).

**So that is a long list of natural medicines! Gosh should you take it all at once?**

**Probably not!**

**So where to start?**

If you are currently on anti-depressants, I would add only vitamins, minerals, and omega 3's in for the time being and see if your mood can be improved enough to consider titrating off of them, work on implementing the [Depression Diet](#) gradually. NEVER ever ever... discontinue your prescription medicines without following the advice of the doctor that prescribed them.

I would start a depressed patient on either St. John's Wort, 5-HTP, OR SAME in conjunction with a multivitamin, vitamin D, omega 3's, and cal/mag. If stress and anxiety is a problem, I would then add in schisandra or passion flower. Following the [Depression Diet](#) guidelines to ensure adequate amino acids in the nervous system, and counseling are integral to a comprehensive mind/body/spirit approach to the management of depression. Try the St. John's wort, 5-HTP, or SAME at least a month if not three before swapping out for a new treatment.

Be cautious when using combinations of the three together as "Serotonin Syndrome" which results in too much serotonin causing anxiety, profuse sweating, irritability and agitation may occur.

<http://www.kitchentablemedicine.com/the-nine-best-natural-remedies-for-depression/>

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Being depressed can make you feel helpless. You're not. Along with therapy and sometimes medication, there's a lot you can do on your own to fight back. Changing your behavior -- your physical activity, lifestyle, and even your way of thinking -- are all natural depression treatments.

Do you want to learn natural depression treatments that can help you feel better -- starting right now? Here are some tips.

- 1. Get in a routine.** If you're depressed, you need a routine, says Ian Cook, MD, a psychiatrist and director of the Depression Research and Clinic Program at UCLA. Depression can strip away the structure from your life. One day melts into the next. Setting a gentle daily schedule can help you get back on track.
- 2. Set goals.** When you're depressed, you may feel like you can't accomplish anything. That makes you feel worse about yourself. To push back, set daily goals for yourself. "Start very small," says Cook. "Make your goal something that you can succeed at, like doing the dishes every other day." As you start to feel better, you can add more challenging daily goals.
- 3. Exercise.** Exercise temporarily boosts feel-good chemicals called endorphins. It may also have long-term benefits for people with depression. Regular physical activity seems to encourage the brain to rewire itself in positive ways, Cook says. How much exercise do you need? You don't need to run marathons to get a benefit. Just walking a few times a week can help.
- 4. Eat healthy.** There is no magic diet that fixes depression, but watching what you eat is a good idea. If depression tends to make you overeat, getting in control of your eating will help you feel better. Although nothing is definitive, Cook says there's evidence that foods with omega-3 fatty acids -- such as salmon and tuna -- and folic acid -- such as spinach and avocado -- could help ease depression.
- 5. Get enough sleep.** Depression can make it hard to get enough sleep, and not getting enough sleep can make depression worse. What can you do? Start by making some changes to your lifestyle. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day. Try not to nap. Take all the distractions out of your bedroom -- no computer and no TV. In time, you may find your sleep improves.
- 6. Take on responsibilities.** When you're depressed, you may want to pull back from life and give up your responsibilities at home and at work. Don't. Staying involved and having daily responsibilities can work as a natural depression treatment. They ground you and give you a sense of accomplishment. If you're not up to full-time school or work, that's fine. Think about part-time. If that seems like too much, consider volunteer work.

- 7. Challenge negative thoughts.** In your fight against depression, a lot of the work is mental -- changing how you think. When you're depressed, you leap to the worst possible conclusions. The next time you're feeling terrible about yourself, use logic as a natural depression treatment. You might feel like no one likes you, but is there real evidence for that? You might feel like the most worthless person on the planet, but is that really likely? It takes practice, but in time you can beat back those negative thoughts before they get out of control.
- 8. Check with your doctor before using supplements.** "There's promising evidence for certain supplements for depression," says Cook, such as fish oil, folic acid, and SAME. However, more research needs to be done before we'll know for sure. Always check with your doctor before starting any supplement, especially if you're already taking medications.
- 9. Do something new.** When you're depressed, you're in a rut. Push yourself to do something different. Go to a museum. Pick up a used book and read it on a park bench. Volunteer at a soup kitchen. Take a language class. "When we challenge ourselves to do something different, there are chemical changes in the brain," says Cook. "Trying something new alters the levels of dopamine, which is associated with pleasure, enjoyment, and learning."
- 10. Try to have fun.** If you're depressed, make time for things you enjoy. What if nothing seems fun anymore? "That's just a symptom of depression," says Cook. You have to keep trying anyway.

As strange as it might sound, you have to work at having fun. Plan things you used to enjoy, even if they feel like a chore. Keep going to the movies. Keep going out with friends for dinner.

When you're depressed, you can lose the knack for enjoying life, Cook tells WebMD. You have to relearn how to do it. In time, fun things really will feel fun again.

<http://www.webmd.com/depression/features/natural-treatments>