

Natural Prevention & Treatment of Depression

(for more resources visit <http://thehealthyskeptic.org/depression>)

1. Learn how to **reduce and manage stress**, and get **at least 7-8 hours** of sleep a night. Stress and insomnia have both been shown to cause depression.
2. Get plenty of **exposure to the sun**, and spend time in the outdoors. Regular exposure ensures adequate vitamin D intake, and time in nature has a grounding and invigorating effect for many people.
3. Engage in **at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise** several days a week, or every day if possible. Exercise is just as effective as antidepressants in relieving depression for most people.
4. Build a strong **network of social support**, including friends, family, a psychotherapist, and/or religious or spiritual guides. Those with strong social support are less likely to become depressed, and recover more quickly.
5. Cultivate as much **pleasure and joy** in your life as possible. Studies show that “feeling good” can reduce stress and alleviate depression. **Make a list** of activities that bring you joy and do at least one each day.
6. If you need additional support, consider **acupuncture, bright light therapy and St. John’s Wort**. Each of these treatments is clinically proven to be as effective as antidepressants for most people.
7. **Restrict** intake of **high-glycemic** index foods (white flour, white rice, sugar, cold cereals, processed foods). These foods stimulate hormonal changes that negatively affect mood. Replace with **whole grains** such as brown rice, oats, quinoa, buckwheat and amaranth.
8. **Avoid processed food**, especially foods containing **polyunsaturated vegetable oils** and *trans* fats. Read labels - most packaged food contains these ingredients. **Omega-6 oils** reduce absorption of omega-3 fatty acids, which are needed by the brain for proper function.
9. Eat and cook with **butter, coconut oil, palm oil or animal fats (tallow, lard, goose fat)**. **Avoid and never cook** with **vegetable oils** such as canola, safflower, corn and soy as they become easily oxidized and rancid when subjected to heat. Eat the **meat, fat and organ meats** of **grass-fed, organically** raised animals. Adequate intake of high-quality protein will stabilize energy production throughout the day.
10. Enjoy **eggs from free-range chickens** regularly. Egg yolks are high in cholesterol and vitamin D, both of which are important for healthy brain function.
11. Take **high-vitamin cod liver oil** and consume plenty of butter from grass-fed cows to ensure adequate levels of vitamins A, D and K, especially during the winter or in climates where sun exposure is difficult.
12. Consume **raw dairy products**, which are rich in beneficial probiotics, enzymes, vitamins and healthy fats. Many people who can’t tolerate pasteurized dairy products have no problem with raw dairy.