



## Holistic Treatment of Depression wholemedicineresource.com and GatorMD.com

Depression is incredibly common effecting over 300 million people globally according the the World Health Organization. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) shows that in the United States, 7.6% of people over 12 years old are depressed.

Why treat depression

- linked to the development of issues such as obesity and heart disease and is associated with other disorders such as substance abuse, insomnia and anxiety— each of which have their own sequelae.
- alters the immune system
- Suicide prevention
- Bringing the mind and body into a balance state

Lets look into the natural Healing Tree for depression

### **Branch #1 Integrative assessment**

There are many medical conditions that mimic depression that need to be ruled out before we actually give a diagnosis of a depressive disorder. An appropriate mental health/psychiatric work up always includes ruling out the medical conditions that could be causing the symptoms. Some conditions that ca mimic depression include deficiencies of vitamins such as B12, folate, iron and vitamin D.

Depression can also be a presenting symptom of other serious disorders including substance abuse, thyroid disorders, liver disease, heavy metal toxicity, neurologic disorder such as Parkinson's and cancer. Once medical issues have been ruled out a diagnosis of a depressive disorder can be established and proper treatment can occur.

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## Branch #2 - Standard Care

### *Antidepressants- the positives*

Antidepressants are some of the most prescribed drugs in the United States. The most common type of antidepressants are a class of drugs called serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), which include medications like Zoloft, Prozac, and Celexa. In certain cases, these drugs are necessary and they can drastically improve functioning and quality of life and can even be lifesaving. We are fortunate to have access to them in the United States.

### *Antidepressants- the negatives*

Many experts agree, however, that antidepressants are overprescribed, and that they may not even work in many cases. It is thought that antidepressants do not produce significant improvements in people with moderate depression, but show significant effects only in the most severely depressed patients. Some other possible side effects include increased suicidal thinking and suicide attempts in the first month of use, headache, nausea, disrupted sleep, drowsiness, agitation, and sexual dysfunction. Beyond side effects, it is notoriously difficult to get off of these medications, as abrupt discontinuation can cause a myriad of unpleasant symptoms, including anxiety, insomnia, headaches, nausea, lethargy, electric shock sensations, and flu-like symptoms.

## Branch #3 - Psychotherapy

If you are depressed, it is important to find a counselor that you like. Cognitive behavioral therapy and other talk therapies can be extremely beneficial at getting to the root of your feelings and working to start to deal with them.

## Branch #4 Nutrition

Nutrition plays a powerful role in the development of depression. A good dietary plan can help correct the nutritional deficiencies that contribute to symptoms and can counteract the inflammation that underlies the disease. We can use proper supplementation to fill in the nutritional gaps that may not be covered by our diet. Further, as we know, a healthful diet can prevent and help treat many other diseases, as well as promote optimal functioning.

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## Branch #5 - Exercise

Regular exercise is excellent for treating depression. This is easy to imagine, since we know how good we feel after we go for a run or attend a yoga class. Studies have shown that exercise can work as well as antidepressants and has the added benefits of improving cardiovascular health and cancer prevention.

## Branch #6 - Sleep

Optimizing sleep is important for treatment. There is a close relationship between sleep disorders and depression. A vast majority of people with depression suffer sleep disturbance, and conversely, people with sleep disturbance are at increased risk for developing depression. In treating depression, it is important to determine why the patient is having sleep difficulties and to address the particular issue. Many issues can cause sleep disturbance including excessive caffeine or stimulant intake, hormonal fluctuations, and urinary problems, to name a few. Sleeping pills, such as Ambien and Lunesta, not only mask the underlying issue, but affect sleep architecture, foster dependence, and are fraught with other reported hazards. There are a variety of effective, natural treatment options, including lifestyle interventions, ritual/ceremony, and a myriad of herbs and supplements, such as valerian, lemon balm, GABA, and melatonin. Like all medicine, there is no one-size-fits-all and elucidating and addressing the underlying cause of sleep disturbance for each individual is necessary.

## Branch #7 - Stress Reduction

Stress reduction is another component of a complete treatment plan. When we reduce our stress, we shift our nervous system from a fight or flight state to a more relaxed, receptive, anti-inflammatory and healing state. We can create this relaxation response by practicing mind-body techniques. There are many options including meditation, yoga, biofeedback, and even simply walking in nature or taking a few nice breaths. Lavender aromatherapy can promote relaxation and improve sleep. Stress reduction has the additional physical benefits of decreasing blood pressure, lowering blood sugar, and decreasing pain, while improving feelings of peace and wellbeing.

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## Branch #8 - Supplements

Common supplements include omega-3's, B vitamins, folate, carnitine, 5 HTP, SAM-e, vitamin D, calcium, chromium, iron, magnesium, selenium and zinc. Discuss with your physician if any of these would be helpful and to discuss possible side effects.

## Branch #9 - Herbs

St. John's Wort is a botanical medicine that has been shown in multiple clinical trials to work as well as standard antidepressants, with fewer side effects, and has a similar mechanism of action. Side effects include possible serotonin syndrome. Potential contraindication for bipolar disorder, potential allergic response; interactions are many (cyp system), St. John's Wort is also notorious for altering the effects of many other commonly prescribed medications including birth control pills, blood thinners, sedatives, and chemotherapy, so it is essential to be evaluated and monitored by a physician while taking this herb.

Botanicals from various healing traditions, include rhodiola, saffron, and milky oat, to name a few have also been shown to have some benefit. A wide range of therapeutic options exist, each with their own benefits and drawbacks, and it is important to find the appropriate intervention for each individual.

## Branch #10 - Therapy

Massage can be used to promote relaxation. Others find acupuncture to be helpful.

## Conclusion

No matter what interventions help people overcome their depression, the underlying task is to allow people travel deeper into their hearts, grow truer to themselves, and love themselves and others more— becoming more resonant with the world around them. Indeed, resolving depression can be an opportunity to become more whole, more in love, more alive.

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