



**INFORMED CHOICES
ABOUT DEPRESSION
PRESENTS:**

ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS FOR DEPRESSION

A guide to some alternative approaches for managing depression.



**CANADIANS WANT MORE INFO
ABOUT ALTERNATIVE
TREATMENTS FOR DEPRESSION.¹**

8%

PREVALENCE OF DEPRESSION
Proportion of Canadian adults who will experience major depression at some point in their lifetime.



ANTIDEPRESSANT MEDICATIONS & PSYCHOTHERAPY (COUNSELLING)

These are the most commonly used and researched treatments for depression and anxiety. Research and conclusions about alternative treatments are limited, but this infographic presents findings about the best researched alternatives to medication and psychotherapy.



PART OF THE EQUATION

A number of alternative treatments are available, many of which are safe to combine with medication or psychotherapy. Finding the right treatments for you can contribute to increased happiness, and sustainable results.

Be sure not to exceed recommended dosages for any new treatment.

Be sure not to stop or alter existing treatments without consulting a health care professional.

#1 YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Dietary Supplements

Dietary Supplements may help replace or regulate levels of substances which impact important brain and bodily functions. Some may improve the effects of antidepressants if taken in the correct dosage.

Safe to use with antidepressants, however some foods may be contra-indicated for certain medications (MAO-Is).

Speak to your doctor or an expert in nutrition about the right dose if you use a supplement. Too little may not be helpful and too much can have negative effects.

OMEGA-3

Look to Fish
OMEGA-3 is found in fatty fishes and fish oils.

1000-2000 mg/day

EPA
EPA is the only form of OMEGA-3 found to be effective in treating depression when taken daily.

AN ADD-ON
SAM-e comes in pill form and can be used on its own or in combination with other medications

SAM-E

Brain Power
SAM-e is responsible for important chemical reactions in the brain and body.

Be Green
Folate is a B vitamin most often found in green vegetables.

B

DAY BY DAY
Our bodies do not store folate, so it should be consumed daily.

SUPER BOOST
Good folate levels can make antidepressants more effective and help reduce depression.

FOLATE

#2 GET MOVING

Regular Exercise

Regular exercise is one of the most important things one can do to improve and maintain health, including to manage depression and overall mental health

Safe to use with antidepressants

Daily Exercise
Aim for 30 minutes of exercise per day. Either all at once or in 10-15 minute increments.

Use Your Heart
The key to effective exercise is activities that increase your heart rate and breathing levels.

Team Up
Do something you enjoy and exercise in a group or with a trainer to help you stick with it!

Other Benefits

- Improved confidence
- Positive attitude and thoughts
- Less loneliness
- Higher energy levels
- Improved sleep

Wash the car
 Ride a bike
 Do some gardening
 Walk the dog

GETTING EXERCISE IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK!

#3 KEEP IT NATURAL

Herbal Medicine

Many health problems were originally treated with medicines derived from plants, and there is growing interest in treating depression this way.

Possible drug interactions with antidepressants

ST. JOHN'S WORT IS A YELLOW FLOWER

The One and Only
So far, research into the use of herbal medicines for depression has only found St. John's Wort to be an effective form of treatment for depression.

A Positive Sign
Although research in this area is limited, findings so far suggest that using a proper dose of St. John's Wort may be as effective as antidepressants.

Feeling Good
St. John's Wort has fewer reported side effects than antidepressant medication.

Keep it Simple
Ensure that you use a trusted brand, and that the St. John's Wort is pure and not a combination of other herbal substances or medications.

#4 LIVE BRIGHT

Light Therapy

Light therapy has been widely studied as a treatment for Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), which involves periods of depression that commence at certain times of the year (winter) and improve without treatment when seasons change.

SAD The depression is considered 'SAD' if it has occurred twice within two years, at times of seasonal transition.

Safe to use with antidepressants
May trigger manic or hypo-manic episodes for those with bipolar conditions

Lightning Speed
Research is limited, but so far findings suggest that light therapy may be as effective as antidepressants for the treatment of SAD. Impacts may also be felt more quickly.

Just Add Light
Light therapy is also effective as an add-on treatment to antidepressant and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

'Tis the Season
It is important to start light therapy when the depression begins and continue regular treatment until the end of the season.

Be Careful
Light therapy may not be suitable for those with eye diseases.

USING LIGHT THERAPY

5000 LUX
One hour per day

10,000 LUX
Half an hour per day

60 - 80 cm
Sit 60-80 cm away from the light, and ensure that the light reaches your face.

#5 CALM THE MIND

Mindfulness Meditation

Although research in this area is limited, findings so far suggest that Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) & Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) may be as effective as antidepressants or psychotherapy for treating depression.

Safe to use with antidepressants

Long Lasting Impact
The positive effects of mindfulness meditation can last up to one year.

Make the Time
45-60 minutes of daily mindfulness is recommended as a tool to treat depression.

The Daily Dose
Mindfulness is most effective when practiced daily. More practice is associated with increased outcomes.

Just Sit Down
Mindfulness meditation is a seated meditation that focuses on breathing, bodily sensation, and mental relaxation.

Prevention
Mindfulness and meditation may be especially effective for those with a history of depressive episodes or to prevent a relapse.

Don't Go It Alone
Working with a qualified instructor or therapist may be effective, especially at the beginning.

ALWAYS KEEP IT SAFE

Information on this infographic is offered 'as is' and is meant only to provide general information that supplements, but does not replace, the information from your health care provider.



See a Doctor
Consult your doctor before altering your depression treatment routine.



Safe Mixing
Side effects and interactions with existing antidepressant medications are possible.



Correct Dosage
Use the correct dosage in order to reach the full effect.



The Mild Side
Research on these treatment options for more severe depression is limited.



More Research
There is limited research about alternative treatments for depression compared to medications and psychotherapy.

References

¹ Cunningham, C.E., Walker, J.R., Eastwood, J.D., Westra, H., Rimas, H., Chen, Y., Marcus, H., Swanson, B., Brackley, K., & the National Needs Research Group. (2014). Modeling mental health information preferences during the early adult years: A discrete choice conjoint experiment. *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives*, 19(4), doi:10.1080/10810730.2015.101524

Research partners



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