

Ayurveda - Health notes

Depression

Depression affects thousands of Irish people each year. Women are twice as likely as men to experience depression in their lives, and are especially vulnerable after the birth of a child, before menstruation and during menopause.

Depression can take many different forms: frequent sad, anxious or "empty" mood; loss of interest and pleasure in activities; fatigue; irritability; social withdrawal, acting out behaviour and family conflict; insomnia; loss of appetite or weight gain; feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness or pessimism; declining school grades or job performance; and poor concentration. For some, the winter season can bring on a low mood, for others depression is caused by major life changes, such as a divorce, major financial problems, a chronic illness, death of a loved one and other life stresses.

Maharishi Ayurveda has much to offer the person who suffers from occasional emotional imbalance. Here we give some practical guidelines to help you stay happy and healthy throughout life. We also recommend seeing a Maharishi Ayurveda physician in your area if you suspect you have depression - he or she can do a pulse diagnosis and tailor an individualized program to help restore balance.

- * Practice the Transcendental Meditation(R) program for 20 minutes twice a day to relieve emotional, physical, mental and environmental stress.
- * Go to bed before 10:00 p.m. Earlier is even better. Getting enough rest is essential for emotional health, and falling asleep during the Kapha time of night generates a deep, restful sleep that truly refreshes mind and body. If you stay up beyond 10:00 p.m., after the Pitta time of night starts, you are likely to feel hungry and give in to cravings to eat "junk" food. Even eating healthy foods at this hour disrupts digestion, which needs the night time to cleanse impurities and rest. Falling asleep after 10:00 p.m. produces a more restless sleep, and you will be more likely to wake up in the night with emotional distress
- * Wake up with the rising sun. Waking up early is critical to preventing depression, because sleeping during the late morning, after 6:00 a.m., causes the shrotas or channels of communication to be clogged with impurities, leading to dullness of mind, depressed moods and slow communication between heart and mind.
- * Walk outdoors when the sun is rising and breathe deeply. Daily exercise is essential to combat depression, because exercise helps moved blocked emotions and hormones out of the body. It increases the power of agni and helps improve processing power. Exercise also releases positive neurohormones, elevating mood and positive thoughts. The early morning sun adds an extra boost, because you become infused with the positive energy of the sun when it is at its most saatvic and benevolent for all body types. Walking in the early morning sun helps open the channels, stimulates digestion and elimination, clears the impurities from the previous day, and is an overall tonic for ideal health.
- * Make sure you eliminate each morning. Constipation can cause headache, dullness, fatigue and depression. If your elimination is sluggish or blocked, start your day with cooked apples, prunes and figs. Take two Herbal Cleanse tablets at night before bed. Drink plenty of water throughout the day. Eat your meals at the same time each day, with the main meal at noon and a lighter meal in the evening. The early morning walk will go a long way toward making your elimination regular as well.
- * Eat intelligent foods. Foods that are natural, unprocessed and contain more of nature's intelligence are digested quickly by the body and create ojas. Ojas is the product of good digestion that creates bliss, stable emotions and good health in the

product of good digestion that creates bliss, stable emotions and good health in the body. Intelligent foods are milk, clove, walnut, pear, and coconut. Eat intelligent proteins such as soaked seeds and nuts with raisins and dates; panir (fresh cheese); and buttermilk rather than yogurt or lassi, as this lighter drink does not increase Kapha and is better for lightening emotions. To make buttermilk, follow this simple recipe. Please note that ayurvedic buttermilk is not the same as the buttermilk you buy in the store. This recipe helps restore the beneficial bacteria in the intestinal tract, thus helping digestion and assimilation.

- * Eat intelligent foods. Give yourself a daily abhyanga (Ayurvedic oil massage). Massage has many benefits: it increases circulation, allows toxins to be cleared from the tissues, invigorates the body, calms the mind and soothes emotions. The sense of touch is associated with emotions, and even if you are massaging yourself you are giving your skin the tactile stimulation needed to balance Vata dosha and calm anxiety and stress. For your massage oil, use Rejuvenation Massage Oil for Men and Rejuvenation Massage Oil for women Follow your massage with a warm bath to flush out the toxins that have been pushed out from the cells with the massage.

Ayurvedic Buttermilk

Ingredients:

- * 1/4 c. fresh cold yogurt (For best results, use freshly made yogurt. To find out to make your own yogurt, see the foods section at www.mapi.com)
- * 3/4 c. purified cold water (the temperature must be cold for this recipe to work)
- * 1/4 t. cumin powder
- * 1/4 t. coriander leaf (cilantro)
- * 1 pinch of rock salt or sea salt

Directions:

- * Place the freshly-made yogurt in the blender and blend for three to five minutes. Add the cold water, and blend again on low for three to five minutes. You will notice that a fatty foam has collected at the top of the yogurt. Skim it off with a spoon and discard. Repeat the blending and removing of the fatty foam if the yogurt remains thick, white and solid. When the yogurt has become watery but still cloudy in colour, you have made buttermilk. Add the spices and stir by hand briefly to mix the spices evenly. Serve at room temperature.
- * Spices such as black pepper help to enhance medha agni, which means they improve coordination between different functions of the mind. Other spices enhance digestion and balance the emotions.

Spice Mixture for Emotional Balance

- * 1 part ground black pepper (for women only)
- * 1 part ground dried ginger
- * 2 parts ground coriander
- * 3 parts ground cumin

* 2 parts ground turmeric

* 1 part crushed black cumin (for women only)

* Do moderate exercise such as Yoga Asanas. In addition to your half-hour walk in the early morning sun, it's important to include Vedic exercise such as Yoga Asanas in your schedule. Yoga Asanas enhance digestion, stimulate the Sadhaka Agni, cleanse toxins from the channels and cells of the body and improve overall balance and health. They are excellent for clearing away the toxins that lead to depression.

* Take Maharishi Ayurveda rasayanas. Rasayanas are elixirs for bliss and rejuvenation, and are the cream of the herbal kingdom, prepared according to ancient methods that can take weeks. Maharishi Amrit Kalash is the most powerful of all the rasayanas, and it has the ability to create bliss, contentment, and ideal health. Like any true rasayana, Maharishi Amrit Kalash has the ability to enhance medha, or the coordination between the mental functions of learning, retention and recall. This kind of coordination is important for balancing the emotions and helping to prevent depression.

HERBS THAT HEAL

Blissful Joy is excellent nutritional support for emotional balance. Blissful Joy helps balance three subdoshas: Tarpaka Kapha, Prana Vata and Sadhaka Pitta. Tarpaka Kapha governs fluid balance in the brain, healthy brain tissue, and communication between brain cells. When in balance, it contributes to a stable personality. Prana Vata - which governs energy, creativity, perception, growth of consciousness and self-realization - is also nourished by Blissful Joy. Finally, Blissful Joy supports Sadhaka Pitta, which is responsible for balanced emotions, self-confidence, healthy desires, motivation and a feeling of fulfillment.

Blissful Joy also improves metabolism and clears away toxins from the microcirculatory channels (shrotas) that deliver nutrients to the cells. Blocked shrotas deprive the cells of energy and vitality and slow down cell regeneration. When your body has more old cells than new ones, fatigue and depression can result. Blissful Joy improves metabolism and helps revitalize cell growth.

One of the herbs included in Blissful Joy is Arjuna Myrobalans, known to strengthen the heart and emotions. Ashwagandha and Holy Basil assist the body's natural resistance to stressful situations. Ashwagandha is also effective in balancing Prana Vata and improving emotional stability. Finally, Ailanthus Excelsa and Arjuna Myrobalans help strengthen the body's natural rejuvenative mechanisms, hastening the replacement of dead or weak cells with fresh, vital ones.

If in addition to fragile emotions you also feel overwhelmed or mentally fatigued, it's recommended that you also take Peace of Mind.

For women who are of menopause age, the Graceful Transition Emotional Support formula can help. This formula is also extremely valuable for women during the postpartum period after childbirth. Emotional Support enhances heart/mind coordination and cleanses the channels between heart and mind. It also deeply nourishes both the heart and mind, improving resilience to stress and emotional imbalance.

Certain herbs included in the Emotional Support formula are targeted to balance Sadhaka Pitta, provide emotional strength and restore bliss. These herbs are Arjuna Myrobalan, Rose, Pearl Bhasma and White Sandalwood. Anjelica Glauca, Nutmeg, Brahmi and Zinc Bhasma improve coordination between the mind and emotions (in ayurvedic terms, between Prana Vata and Sadhaka Pitta). Brahmi, Aloeweed, and Ashwagandha provide emotional and mental strength. Indian Asparagus nourishes all types of body tissues, including those that support the heart and mind.

