Try These Herbal Supplements for Depression

by PATRICIA BRATIANU

Using Herbs for Depression Treatment

Herbs for depression can lift the spirit, reduce anxiety, nourish the nervous system and provide the energy needed for healing. Like many pharmaceuticals prescribed to treat depression, herbal remedies must be taken consistently, often for several weeks, in order to reach their maximum effectiveness for the treatment of depression.

Herbs have few side effects, are safer and typically tolerated better than drugs used to treat depression. There have been few instances of side effects reported after taking herbal supplements for depression, compared to the numerous side effects caused by depression medication.

If you are taking a pharmaceutical medication to treat depression, do not use an herbal remedy simultaneously as they may increase or decrease the effectiveness of each other.

If you have mild depression that you have experienced for a short period of time, you may want to institute an herbal remedy yourself. However if you have prolonged moderate to severe depression, or other complicating health issues, consult with an expert in herbal medicine who has experience treating individuals who suffer from depression.

Seek immediate assistance if you feel severely depressed, suicidal, or want to hurt yourself. Call a suicide hotline, your local mental health center or 911.

Herbs for Depression

There are multiple herbs for depression you can try. Some of the most popular herbal supplements for depression include St. John's wort, lemon balm and ashwagandha.

St. John’s Wort

St. John’s wort has been used to treat depression successfully for at least several hundred years. Modern research confirms St. John’s wort is effective for the treatment of mild to moderate depression.

It may work for severe depression too, but that is best left to experts. The herb is useful for the treatment of various depressive disorders, including seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

St. John’s wort is a neurological adaptogen, which is a type of herb that nourishes the tissues. Adaptogens help the body withstand stress, strengthening and protecting the body from the effects of physical, emotional and mental stress.

It also protects and repairs nerves, which are necessary for the transmission of electrical and biochemical

messages. They aid in pain management and facilitate the proper functioning of the feel-good compounds within the brain and nerves, including dopamine and serotonin.

Proper Use of St. John's Wort

St. John's wort requires two to six weeks to see maximum effectiveness.

While it may be consumed in many forms, I am partial to tinctures or extracts of the entire organically grown herb. Organic is best as it doesn't add the stress of toxins, including pesticides and chemical fertilizers to your body.

If using a tincture take two milliliters of a 1:1 extract, twice daily. Tinctures contain a tiny amount of alcohol, so if you would rather not use them, try a dry extract. The usual dose of a dry extract is 300 milligrams three times daily.

Teas work for mild depression, however, some of the healing compounds do not extract well in water.

While St. John's wort does not usually precipitate any unpleasant side effects, a few have been noted. These include skin issues, gastrointestinal complaint and spotting. The herb can interact with pharmaceutical medications used to treat depression, oral contraceptives and blood thinners.

Lemon Balm

Luscious lemon balm is a member of the mint family and makes a delicious beverage. Lemon balm settles nervous stomachs, which are common if you suffer from anxiety or depression.

If you suffer from anxiety and experience palpitations, lemon balm can help relieve them. It also relieves tension and migraine headaches and balances hormones, which is important for women who suffer from depression related to their menstrual period.

For the treatment of mild depression, try the tea, a glycerite or a tincture. A few drops of the glycerite, administered under the tongue, relieves anxiety without causing drowsiness. Take two to six milliliters of a 1:5, 40% alcohol tincture three times daily for the treatment of mild depression.

The herb can interfere with thyroid medications.

Ashwagandha

Ashwagandha is an ancient ayurvedic herb that enhances the vitality of your entire body. It decreases tension while simultaneously improving energy levels.

Ashwagandha relieves depression and may make you feel better physically, emotionally and mentally. The herb improves memory and supports the health of the immune system. It has traditionally been used to promote support a healthy sleep/wake pattern.

I recommend you use a tincture, as the tea is not tasty. Use two to four milliliters of a 1:5, 45% alcohol tincture three times daily. If you prefer capsules, take two 500 milligrams capsules twice daily.

Use ashwagandha with professional supervision if you take anti-anxiety medications, including barbiturates or benzodiazepines, as the herb may potentiate the effects of those pharmaceutical agents. It is generally well tolerated otherwise. Rare side effects include gastrointestinal disturbances and skin problems.

Herbs and Depression

Herbs are an excellent first line of defense against depression and are among some of the best supplements for depression and energy. One of the most important ways herbs are superior to pharmaceuticals is they enhance

the health of the entire body.

Herbs are a proven remedy for mild to moderate depression and are better tolerated than drugs; however, they are not the answer for all people who are depressed.

Depression is a multifaceted condition that best responds to a comprehensive treatment approach. Other therapies that are beneficial for the treatment of depression include proper nutrition, mental health counseling, and exercise.