

## **Tackle the "Hidden" Cause of Depression**

If you tell your conventional doctor that you're feeling down in the dumps, have lost your appetite, or have to drag yourself out of bed in the morning—chances are you'll leave his office with a prescription for an antidepressant. This is absurd. These drugs are overprescribed, dangerous, and unnecessary—especially since there are so many natural ways to boost your mood.

Let's start with fish oil, which, according to the latest research, may be the best way to beat depression...

**It works by tackling the "hidden" cause of depression—inflammation** For years, we've known that depression can be caused by a neurotransmitter imbalance—but fascinating studies have emerged on the role inflammation plays in mood alteration. This research is helping to explain how neurotransmitters are affected, and why conventional treatment isn't very effective.

Cytokines are chemical messengers that allow the brain, immune system, and endocrine (hormonal) system to communicate with one another. Depression is linked with excessive production of "pro-inflammatory" cytokines, which impair normal brain function...resulting in poor appetite, lethargy, cognitive impairment and more. In other words, they produce the classic symptoms of depression.

In addition to ramping up production of these pro-inflammatory cytokines in the brain, inflammation has also been associated with other health concerns such as heart disease and cancer.

### **Fish oil can make a world of difference**

Getting a handle on inflammation is obviously important for staving off depression, and one of the best ways to do this is none other than fish oil. The omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil inhibit the production of the pro-inflammatory cytokines linked with depression.

Several studies have shown that people who frequently consume fish have decreased risk of depression and suicidal thoughts. Other research has demonstrated that lower levels of omega-3s are associated with depression in older people and with postpartum depression in women.

In addition to increasing your intake of omega-3-rich salmon, sardines, or other fatty fish, I recommend that everyone take a minimum of two fish oil capsules daily. If you're suffering with depression, take five or six capsules a day to achieve the 1 g dose of EPA shown to be most effective. (Most 1,000 mg fish oil capsules contain 180 mg EPA and 120 mg DHA.)

### **But the natural "cures" don't end there...**

To further reduce inflammation and improve your mood and overall health, I recommend getting regular exercise and losing excess body fat (especially in the abdomen). A healthful

diet is essential as well, so make sure you eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and lean protein and avoid refined carbohydrates and processed fats. In addition, it's important to take an antioxidant-rich daily multivitamin and mineral supplement.

If you still need a little help boosting your spirits, SAMe (200-400 mg) and St. John's wort (900 mg) are proven mood enhancers, and vitamin B12 (1,000 mcg), magnesium (500-1,000 mg), and zinc (30-50 mg) are also helpful. All of these supplements should be taken daily in divided doses.

**Julian Whitaker, MD**