

IS SEASONAL DEPRESSION GETTING TO YOU?

A NATURAL CURE FOR THE WINTER BLUES

by Julia Ross, MA

What is it that can make the holiday season so unpleasant? Is it really loneliness...or the in-laws? Too often we attribute all our winter moodiness and overeating to psychological factors, when the real problem is often simply *the weather!* When the light dims every fall, many of us fade right along with it, and start to crave the brief lift we can get from chocolate and cookies. From Halloween to Valentines Day, we can literally slip into the emotional shadows. What distinguishes those of us who get the winter blues from those who love winter coziness? The deciding factor is often our brain's levels of the potent mood enhancer, serotonin. Serotonin production is stimulated by light. The brighter the day, the more serotonin our brains produce. Even bright indoor light (over 300 watts within three feet of us) can provide a temporary serotonin boost. Exercise is another reliable serotonin stimulator. But it's hard to exercise when you're depressed, especially when it's dark and cold outside and your sleep-inducing melatonin levels are at their all-year high.

Fortunately, as Julia Ross explains in her most recent book, *The Mood Cure*, there are easier, more reliable ways to bring out your internal sun and block those carb cravings.

- ***Boost your serotonin in 24 hours with 5HTP.*** Try 50 to 150 mg of 5HTP mid afternoon (as the sun sinks) and again at 10 p.m. (if sleep is a problem). Why? 5HTP converts directly into mood and appetite regulating serotonin, and serotonin is also used to make sleep-promoting melatonin.* Afternoon and evening moods rise and the yen for sweets and starches (or alcohol) typically drop on the first day.

- ***Other Nutritional Supplements that can also block the holiday sweet tooth:*** L-Glutamine, chromium and a good multi-vitamin/mineral. (These, and 5HTP, are available in all health stores and many pharmacies.)

- ***Exercise right before facing high carb hurdles like holiday dinners, potlucks, buffets and cocktail parties:*** 15-20 minutes moderate exercise, e.g., fast walking, dancing to the radio before you shower, jogging (in-place is fine), temporarily reduces the sweet tooth and improves mood by raising serotonin levels.

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- ***Eat before you drink any caffeine, i.e., coffee, tea or cola:*** Caffeine suppresses serotonin and melatonin, and ruins your appetite for the low carb foods like protein and vegetables that can keep you satisfied all day, instead of desperate for sweets when the caffeine wears off. Use L-tyrosine (500 - 1000 mg) in the morning to stop caffeine cravings and become alert much more naturally.
- ***Get plenty of bright light during the day at home and at work:*** Using a therapeutic light box or even a 300 watt bulb in a fixture near you will help raise serotonin and reduce sugar and starch cravings, as well as help eliminate winter depression. Or you can get a special lamp designed for SAD.
- ***Never skip a meal:*** Eating three solid meals a day helps make your body indifferent to candy, ice cream, bread and pasta.
- ***Eat plenty of protein at every meal:*** 4-6 oz. dark meat turkey, a 4-6 oz. salmon steak, three small lamb chops, a chicken breast, a cup of cottage cheese, an omelet.
- ***Eat 4 cups of colored vegetables a day:*** Salads, stir-fries, sautés, carrot and celery sticks, cherry tomatoes – at least the amount that would fit into a quart ice cream carton.

*Be sure to check *The Mood Cure's* supplement safety section to make sure there are no reasons for you not to use 5HTP, glutamine or tyrosine.

Julia Ross's first book, *The Diet Cure: The 8-Step Program to Rebalance Your Body Chemistry and End Food Cravings, Weight Problems and Mood Swings - Now*, was chosen for Amazon.com's "Tremendous Ten" list of Health, Mind and Body books and has sold over 150,000 copies. Ross is Executive Director of the Recovery Systems clinic in Mill Valley, California, specializing in nutrient therapy and biochemical rebalancing. Her latest book, *The Mood Cure* contains several chapters on natural serotonin building strategies based on her clinic's 18 year experience.

For further information go to www.moodcure.com.

