

General Lifestyle Treatments for  
Depressions  
The Way Out  
By  
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# Bright Light Therapy

## Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

- Common disorder in Northern Latitudes
- Occurs most often in winter
- Little or no sunlight even at noon
- Symptoms identical to depression
- Resolves when individuals are exposed to bright light
  - (2,000 to 10,000 lux) for at least 30 minutes a day

# Bright Light Therapy

- This amount of brightness can be achieved indoors by:
  - 1. using a special bright light
    - (such as the Hap-E light)<sup>37</sup>
  - 2. being outdoors in US (at similar latitudes) at least 30 minutes after sun-up and at least 30 minutes before sundown
- The only mandatory exposed human surface to the light is the eyes

# Bright Light Therapy

## SAD

- Bright Indoor light not sufficient
- 400 lux less than 15% of daylight brightness
- Outdoor light can reach 3,000 lux on a bright sunny day<sup>38</sup>
- Bright light like sunlight increases serotonin production in the daytime
- Can tx depression and fatigue

# Bright Light Therapy

- Bright light exposure in the day may also increase blood melatonin levels at night
  - Which can create more restful and efficient sleep <sup>41</sup>
- Bright light therapy can help restore circadian rhythm
- If early morning awakening (3am-5am) but needs more sleep, exposure to bright light in early evening for 30 minutes can restore normal sleep pattern

# Bright Light Therapy

- More common problem of not able to fall asleep at bedtime (insomnia) combined with awakening too late in the morning
  - exposure to early morning bright light (6am-8am) can restore normal sleep cycle<sup>42</sup>
- Morning light therapy for depression brings superior results to evening light therapy
- Evening therapy is better than no light therapy at all<sup>43</sup>

# Bright Light Therapy

- One important benefit of outdoor exercise
- Negative ions
- Fresh county air has negative ions
- Demonstrated to prevent and treat depression <sup>44</sup>

# References

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- <sup>38</sup> Reiter RJ, Robinson J. Back in Sync. In Melatonin: Your Body's Natural Wonder Drug. New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1995 p.161
- <sup>41</sup> Laakso ML, Porkka-Heiskanen T, et al. Twenty four hour patterns of pineal melatonin and pituitary and plasma prolactin in male rats under natural and artificial lighting conditions. Neuroendocrinology 1988 Sep;48(3):308-313

# References

- <sup>42</sup> Wagner DR. Sleep disorders; disorders of the circadian sleep wake cycle. Neurologic Clinics 1996 Aug;14(3):651
- <sup>43</sup> Terman M. A controlled trial of timed bright light and negative air ionization for treatment of winter depression. Arch Gen Psychiatry 1998 Oct;55(10):875-882
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