

Using Herbs  
in  
Anxiety & Depression  
*Safely & Successfully*

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# *Using Herbs in Anxiety & Depression*

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# What Is Anxiety and Depression?

We hear so much about drugs, natural and chemical, to treat anxiety and depression; but do we really understand what we're treating?

What is anxiety? What is depression?

What are the differences and what causes anxiety and depression?

**Anxiety** feels uneasy, apprehensive. You may be worried about the outcome of an upcoming event or the possibility of one. Anxiety can range from a mild case of butterflies in the stomach to severe anxiety that manifests as fear and panic. In some cases, anxiety can become debilitating fright, lasting for long periods of time, to the point where the person loses all reason, logic and sight of reality. They may fear they're having a heart attack.

That's a real ***panic attack***.

Another dis-ease related to anxiety is ***Phobias***. Phobias are fears taken to extremes, and many people have mild phobias. Severe phobias are much more than annoying. Phobias, as well as anxiety are closely linked to high blood pressure, heart spasms and fatal heart dis-ease.

# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

An anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to one or more traumatic events that threatened or caused great physical harm.

- Flashbacks and nightmares
- Avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma
- Increased arousal, such as difficulty falling or staying asleep, anger, and hypervigilance
- Symptoms last more than six months and cause significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (e.g. problems with work and relationships).

- Caused by both physical & psychological trauma
  - Military service veterans
  - Battered women/children
  - Victims of Sexual Abuse
  - Witness to violence or accidents involving serious injuries or death
  - Medical procedures, especially in children
  - Natural disasters
- Standard treatment as for typical Anxiety and Depressive disorders, i.e. drug therapy and talk therapy.

# Food and Anxiety

## a. Simple, Calming Foods during the day prevent attacks

Brown Rice

Mashed Potatoes

Yogurt

Oatmeal

Steamed Vegetables

Goat's Milk

## b. Calcium - A natural adaptogenic, Immune supportive

Sesame Seeds

Soy

Dairy

Broccoli

Dark leafy veggies

Almonds

c. Magnesium protects the nervous system

Kelp  
Most Nuts

Wheatgerm  
Soy Foods

Bran

d. B vitamins support the adrenals and nervous system

Nutritional Yeast  
Nuts

Whole Grains  
Beans

Brans

e. Vitamin C is a good antioxidant, helping the body respond to stress in a healthy way.

Hot and Sweet Peppers  
Kiwi

Greens  
Acerola Cherries

Broccoli

f. Foods that Elevate Anxiety

Caffeine  
Salt

Sugar  
Alcohol

Refined & Processed  
Preserved Meats



# Vitamin Supplements Can Help, Too

Pycnogenol, 30-50 mg. daily

Calcium/Magnesium/Zinc at night

B-Complex 100 mg. w/ extra B6 3 times daily

Vitamin C up to 3000 mg. daily w/ bioflavonoids

# Herbal Therapies: Food as Medicine; Medicine as Food

A delicious herbal tea for prevention:

1 Part Chamomile

1 Part Schisandra Berry

1/2 Part Eleuthero

1 Part Scullcap

3 Parts Lemon Balm

2 Parts St. Johnswort

1 Part Spearmint

1 Part Shatavari

Other soothing herbs to consider include rosemary, valerian, basil, passion flower.

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# Depression

Depression is an emotional condition, either

Neurotic: relating to, involving, affected by, or characteristic of a mild psychiatric disorder character...

Overanxious, oversensitive, or obsessive about everyday things or

Psychotic: A class of psychiatric symptoms associated with being out of contact with reality. May include hallucinations and/or delusions.

Depression is characterized by feelings of hopelessness and/or inadequacy.

## I. Five Major Causes

- Great Loss; spouse or child; inability to mourn or grieve
- Repressed anger/aggression
- Learned behavior used to control relationships
- Amino acid, nutrient deficiencies which cause chemical imbalance
- Drug induced depression; i.e. drug-caused nutrient deficiency

# Food & Nutrition are Key

Diet should consist of 15% vegetable protein:

Soy, i.e. tofu, tempe, miso

Kidney Beans

Seeds

Nuts

Broccoli

Chickpeas

Lentils

All Legumes

Fish & other seafoods

Whole Grains

Other Foods as for Anxiety

Eliminate all sugary foods, alcohol and caffeine to maintain stable blood sugar levels.

# Supplements May Be Essential

Magnesium	500 mg 2 daily	Depression Reliever
CoQ10	100 mg. daily	Depression Reliever
Glutamine	1000 mg daily	Brain oxygenator
Vitamin C	2000 mg. daily	Natural tranquilizer; helps drug withdrawal

## Herbs for Nutrition and Balance

Gingko biloba extract	Focus; Circulation
St. Johnswort extract	Antidepressant; anti-trauma
Milk Thistle Seed extract	Liver Support

Use same herbal tea blend as for anxiety.

# Personal Wellness Care

Exercise

Breathing Exercises

Sunshine

Meditation

Waling

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# Standard Antidepressant Drug Therapy

SSRI's – Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors – believed to treat depression by affecting the levels of a neurotransmitter called serotonin.

SNRI's – Serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors - believed to treat depression by affecting the levels of two neurotransmitters called *serotonin* and *norepinephrine*.

Both can take 6-8 weeks to reach therapeutic effect.

# Psychotherapy

- Psychotherapy /"talk therapy,"
  - can be very helpful for people with some forms of depression. Like all treatment options, psychotherapy can be used alone or in combination with medication or other treatments.
- Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)
  - helps to reduce depression symptoms by challenging and reversing negative beliefs and attitudes.
- Interpersonal therapy (IPT)
  - helps facilitate the resolution of role disputes and helps to overcome problems with social skills and other interpersonal factors that may impact the development of depression.



# EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization And Reprocessing

- A comprehensive, integrative psychotherapy approach.
- It contains elements of many effective psychotherapies in
- Structured protocols that are designed to maximize treatment effects. These include psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, interpersonal, experiential, and body-centered therapies
- Includes 8 phases of treatment
- After EMDR processing, clients generally report that the emotional distress related to the memory has been eliminated, or greatly decreased, and that they have gained important cognitive insights. Importantly, these emotional and cognitive changes usually result in spontaneous behavioral and personal change, which are further enhanced with standard EMDR procedures.

## Meds or No Meds?

It is possible in certain types of anxiety and depression, to wean from drugs and use only herbal therapies, or to design a protocol that enlists the properties of both herbs and pharmaceuticals.

*It is never advised to stop meds “cold turkey”.*

*The weaning process must be done gradually and with close monitoring to ensure the patient's safety.*

- There are people who have serious chemical imbalances in the brain which must be treated pharmaceutically.
- For those people, herbs can still be a part of the treatment plan, but used to augment the drug therapy rather than replace it, and nourish the body, mind and spirit.
- Very often the use of herbs in addition to drugs, can make it possible to reduce the drug dosage. By doing this, it's easier to maintain the health of vital organs which are frequently adversely affected by drugs.

# Materia Medica for Anxiety & Depression

**Burdock Root**  
(*Arctium lappa*)

Alterative, Liver/Kidney Tonic. Liver: Anger  
Kidneys: Fear

**German Chamomile**  
(*Matricaria chamomilla*)

Gentle nervine, carminative, calming in warm tea; stimulating in cold tea (Dr. Mary Bove)

**Cleavers**  
(*Galium aparine*)

Lymphatic, use when anxiety is accompanied by ulcers (combine with Poke, Echinacea & Calendula) and nervous skin disorders (with Yellow Dock and Burdock.

**Dandelion Leaf/Root**  
(*Taraxacum officinale*)

Liver/Kidney tonic. Leaf: excellent diuretic; safer than pharmaceuticals regarding the leaching of potassium from the body, which would cause strain to the cardio-vascular system.

Root: gentle tonic for the liver. Important to keep liver strong & healthy so it can continue to process and flush toxins from the body. Pharmaceuticals put a tremendous strain on the liver.

<b>Eleutherococcus</b> <i>(Eleutherococcus senticosus)</i>	Adaptogen. Use in adrenal exhaustion, headache, dizziness, depression, brain fog, influenza, poor appetite, short breath, temperature sensitivity. Combines well w/ Schizandra Berry.
<b>Hops</b> <i>(Humulus lupulus)</i>	Nervine sedative. Small doses for anxiety; larger doses for insomnia. Literature suggests exacerbation of depression, but I have not seen this.
<b>Kava Kava</b> <i>(Piper methysticum)</i>	Excellent for anxiety, stress, restlessness. Sedative nervine. Causes slight numbing of lips. Some experience a gentle “high”. Long term use may cause liver stress/damage.
<b>Lavender</b> <i>(Lavendula vera or L. Officinalis)</i>	Uplifting fragrance in small to moderate amounts. Too much may cause headache and nausea. Useful when headache accompanies anxiety or depression
<b>Lemon Balm</b> <i>(Melissa officinale)</i>	Calmative, carminative, nervine tonic, mild nervine sedative, Anti-anxiety specific for nervous stomach. Contraindicated in hypothyroidism.

<b>Licorice</b> <i>(Glycyrrhiza glabra)</i>	Sweet, adaptogenic, diuretic, laxative. Monitor blood pressure in hypotensive people.
<b>Nettle Leaf</b> <i>(Urtica dioica)</i>	King of the nervine tonics! Use in all protocols unless there's a Vitamin K issue, i.e. Chemotherapy. Rich in vitamins/minerals/plant protein. Food!
<b>Oats</b> <i>(Avena sativa)</i> Nurtures focus and	Nervine tonic. Calcium-rich. Delicious. Soothing. Sweet & moist. Use in nervous exhaustion. concentration.
<b>Schizandra Berry</b> <i>(Schizandra chinensis)</i>	Adaptogen. Hepato tonic/protective. Combines well with Eleuthero and Astragalus as an excellent adrenal brew.
<b>Scullycap</b> <i>(Scutellaria lateriflora)</i>	Nervine sedative. Soothes overwrought emotions. Helpful in neuralgia and rheumatic complaints. Excellent for low back pain when combined with St. Johnswort. Massage tincture into painful area. Contraindicated with antidepressant drugs. Overdose causes vomiting and possible convulsions.

## **St. Johnswort**

*(Hypericum perforatum)*

Anti-anxiety, Anti-trauma, Antiviral, Nervine  
Vasodilator. Internal use may cause  
photosensitivity.

Contraindicated with antidepressants, blood  
thinners and synthetic birth control drugs.

## **Valerian**

*(Valeriana officinalis)*

Nervine sedative. Antispasmodic. Brings a deep  
calm and restful sleep in 95% of people. 5%  
experience opposite action.

## **Astragalus**

*(Astragalus membranaceus)*

Adaptogen, immuno protective.

Contraindicated in low blood pressure.

## **Rhodiola Root**

*(Rhodiola rosea)*

Adaptogen, antidepressant, antioxidant,  
antiarrhythmic, astringent. Mild SNS stimulant;  
cardio/neuro protective.

# References

Herbal Healing for Women	Rosemary Gladstar
The Way of Herbs	Michael Tierra
Healthy Healing	Linda Rector-Page
The Healing Foods	Patricia Hausman/Judith Ben Hurley
The Healing Power of Aromatherapy	Hasnain Walji, Ph.D
The Family Herbal	Barbara & Peter Theiss
Healing Wise	Susun Weed
Heal Your Body	Louise Hay
Medical Herbalism	David Hoffman
The Healing Power of Herbs	Michael Murray
The Earthwise Herbal (Old & New Worlds)	Matthew Wood
The Book of Herbal Wisdom	Matthew Wood
Adaptogens	David Winston
Herbal Therapy & Supplements	David Winston
The teachings of the late William LeSassier	



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